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**5 STEPS
to BECOME
a TOP 1%
LEADER**

TONY ROBBINS

**HARNESS
MOMENTUM
AND GET
UNSTUCK**

**NO
MORE
GAMES**

**MEGAN
RAPINOE
TAKES THE FIELD
FOR EQUALITY**

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COVER PHOTO BY RAVEN VARONA

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INTRODUCING

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The World Arena: Are You in It — or Just Talking About It?

Do you ever wonder why there are so many more critics than real leaders in the world? We see examples every day at sporting events where out-of-shape fans boo athletes when the player or coach makes a mistake. In politics, people with no real solutions get attention by tearing down the ones who are taking positive action. Isn't it time to start ignoring these critics and show appreciation instead for the imperfect humans who are striving to make progress?

I have found that life is so much better when I surround myself with the positive problem-solvers on our planet. Or as Brené Brown puts it, “For me, if you're not in the arena getting your ass kicked, I'm not interested in your feedback.”

Soccer megastar Megan Rapinoe certainly fits that description — both literally and figuratively. In this issue's cover story on page 46, Rapinoe talks about her mission to leave the game “in a better place for the next generation of players.” For Rapinoe, that meant stepping into the arena to fight for gender pay equality in soccer and beyond. And that mission evolved into using her platform to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights and racial justice as well as investing in business as a force for good.

“Being a leader is about being faced with the choice to make the right decision for the greater good and always choosing it every time,” she tells *Real Leaders*. “A real leader is not afraid to challenge the status quo to make positive changes within their company, or industry, or in the world.”

On page 56, you'll find a special section on executive coaches. There are a lot of excellent coaches in the world, and these are just a few — but we picked them because they are accessible to you and they aren't just people telling other people what to do. These coaches have all been in the proverbial arena battling it out and making their own way in business and in life.

As we prepare our goals for 2024 and beyond, let's ignore the critics and armchair quarterbacks and follow the advice of the below excerpt from Theodore Roosevelt's famous “Man in the Arena” speech. I took the liberty of modifying it slightly to inspire all people who are “striving valiantly.”

We'll see you in the arena! ■



Mark Van Ness, Founder
Mark@Real-Leaders.com

“It is not the critic who counts; not the [person] who points out how the strong [one] stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the [person] who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends [themselves] in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if [they fail], at least fails while daring greatly, so that [their] place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT

NEW INSIDE

Debating Tony Robbins' Column

Real Leaders announces the debut of an exclusive regular column by Tony Robbins, the world's leading life and business strategist. Look for his coaching expertise quarterly in our print magazine (page 12) and monthly on real-leaders.com. Robbins ranked No. 1 on *Real Leaders'* World's Top 50 Keynote Speakers list for 2023. The bestselling author and philanthropist has empowered over 50 million people around the world through his audio programs, educational videos, live seminars — and now his articles for *Real Leaders*.



INTRODUCING

Real Leaders UNITE Conference

We are excitedly preparing for a first-of-its-kind event, Real Leaders UNITE. The top impact CEOs in the world will gather Feb. 5–7, 2024 at the Kona Kai Resort in San Diego to connect, collaborate, and celebrate. Collaborative sessions will build deep relationships, and attendees will walk away with one month's worth of one-on-one CEO meetings in just a couple days. The 2024 Top Impact Companies will also be recognized with a gala on Feb. 6.

➔ To see if you're eligible to attend UNITE or to inquire about getting involved, visit real-leaders.com/UNITE.

REAL LEADERS BENEFIT

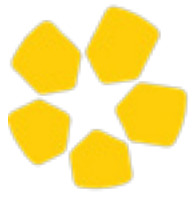
Connecting with Impactful Coaches

Coaches can provide the perspective, tools, and strategies needed to help propel a company's impact. That's why we're spotlighting accessible business and executive coaches in this edition of *Real Leaders* magazine (page 56). We want to continue the conversation and bring more coaches into the fold of our community for impact.

✉
READY TO BE WOWED?
Receive a Friday morning dose of inspiration with our FREE weekly WoW! Words of Wisdom email: real-leaders.com/subscribe

➔ If you know of an outstanding coach whom we should highlight or consider working with in our Impact Collaborative, we'd love to hear from you. Email info@real-leaders.com.

Join us at



SOCAP 23

October 23 to 25
in San Francisco

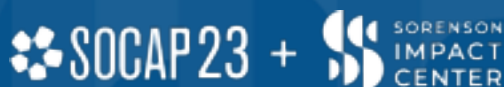
The Impact Movement's Flagship Event

SOCAP continues to evolve and expand ways to engage around the ideas of social capital and the impact economy. Attending this conference reminds me that there are so many aspects of work to be done that there is room for all in the tent, and that we must keep working to make the tent even bigger.

— Lisa Hanson, Co-Founder of Global Urban Village

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“A real leader is someone who listens and is listened to, who can empathize and seize the importance of everybody’s opinion, and who is OK with keeping a smile on their face when times get tough.”



CAROLINE DUELL
Founder and CEO, All Good
Real Leaders Podcast Ep. 344

What's Your Definition of a Real Leader?

From our impact community around the world

“It’s being authentic and aware, being open with a beginner’s mindset, and not pretending you know the answers.”



JENN LIM
Co-founder and CEO, Delivering Happiness
Real Leaders Podcast Ep. 345



LISTEN UP
Did you know we're on Apple Podcasts and Spotify? Search the apps for "Real Leaders Podcast."

“Real leadership is about having a vision for what’s possible and what you want and then having the courage to gather people to help in that journey and make it a reality.”



BRIAN NICKERSON
Founder and CEO, MagicLinks
Real Leaders Podcast Ep. 268

“They inspire others to work toward a mission that's adding value to the world and making it a better place. They lead with values like humility, courage, integrity, and perseverance.”



DIANE CALVI
President and CEO, Village Enterprise
Real Leaders Podcast Ep. 362

“A real leader is somebody who protects great ideas at all costs and who is willing and able to change over time based on new inputs with versatility.”



REGINA KLINE
Founder and Managing Partner, Enable Ventures
Real Leaders Podcast Ep. 347

“They lead from the front and are willing to fail. They're supportive, and they get out of the way.”



TAHA BAWA
Co-founder and CEO, Goodwall
Real Leaders Podcast Ep. 348

THE INSIDE TRACK

LEADING

Sounds
that Save
p. 24

Rainforest Connection installs sound sensors in rainforests around the world to detect illegal logging and poaching and alert local authorities to stop them.

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How to Get Unstuck



Tony Robbins is one of the world's leading life and business strategists and ranked No. 1 on *Real Leaders* Top 50 Keynote Speakers list for 2023. This article is the debut of his regular column in *Real Leaders*.

Harness momentum like an elite athlete and tap it to achieve your long-term goals.

By Tony Robbins

Everyone gets stuck at times. Athletes call it getting in a slump. If you're in business, it could be a plateau in sales. Or in a relationship, it could feel like a rut. Regardless of the context, if you're an achiever or a leader, breaking through to the next level requires understanding how to tap into the power of momentum.

Momentum is one of the strongest forces in life. Once you unleash momentum, it's easier to succeed than it is to fail. Momentum is the difference between long-term success and failure. People who succeed have mastered how to create long-term, sustainable momentum.

Have you ever watched an athlete or team that's just dominating another player or team, and then all

of a sudden somebody does something or creates a spark, steals the ball, intercepts it, whatever in that sport — and wham! The energy shifts, and the other team starts to take over: That's momentum.

The fact is it's actually easier to succeed than it is to fail. But if you want to build positive momentum, you must become certain on how to get results in advance, in your mind and body. Most people call this visualization. Tap into what is actually working and repeat, and repeat, and repeat. You will feel the result over and over again. Then your body believes it and takes over.

The best players in the world do this in basketball. Multiple studies have revealed how using visualization of a perfect practice free throw allows players to make perfect free throws

more consistently when they physically practice. It's practicing the perfect technique or actions that matters most. By seeing and feeling what they wanted to achieve every time, players — and you — can build circuitry and certainty in the body. So when it comes time to do it, your mind and body will execute. To build momentum, find ways to increase certainty in your body, even for things you've never accomplished before.

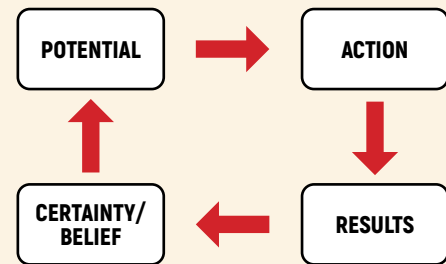
I'll give you an example. In May 1954, legendary British runner Roger Bannister became the first man to run a mile in under 4 minutes — 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds to be exact. The feat had never been achieved before. To reach the unreachable milestone, Bannister later explained how he visualized breaking the 4-minute mark before it ever happened by imagining himself running through the tape as it was announced that he had broken the world record. This visualization helped propel him to the record.

Soon, Bannister was not alone in achieving the once seemingly unreachable feat. Just 46 days later, Bannister's record was broken by his main Australian rival, John Landy. No one had done it in history, but now one guy, then two did it. A year later, three more runners did it. Many years later, more than 200 people have done it, including high school students. So the question is, what happened when Bannister broke the once unachievable 4-minute barrier? Momentum. Others became certain it could be done. And it changed what was possible and the previous pattern of what was considered normal achievement.

You may struggle for years and years to grow your business, its client base, revenues, and brand standing, and it can prove frustrating. And then one day, you figure out the pattern. It's almost like having a wrench on one of those fire hydrants. Once it opens, it flows and it keeps flowing. This is what you need to tap into.

THE CHALLENGE IS MANY PEOPLE BUY INTO A BELIEF THAT MAKES THEM MORE LIMITED THAN THEIR TRUE CAPACITY.

The Success Cycle



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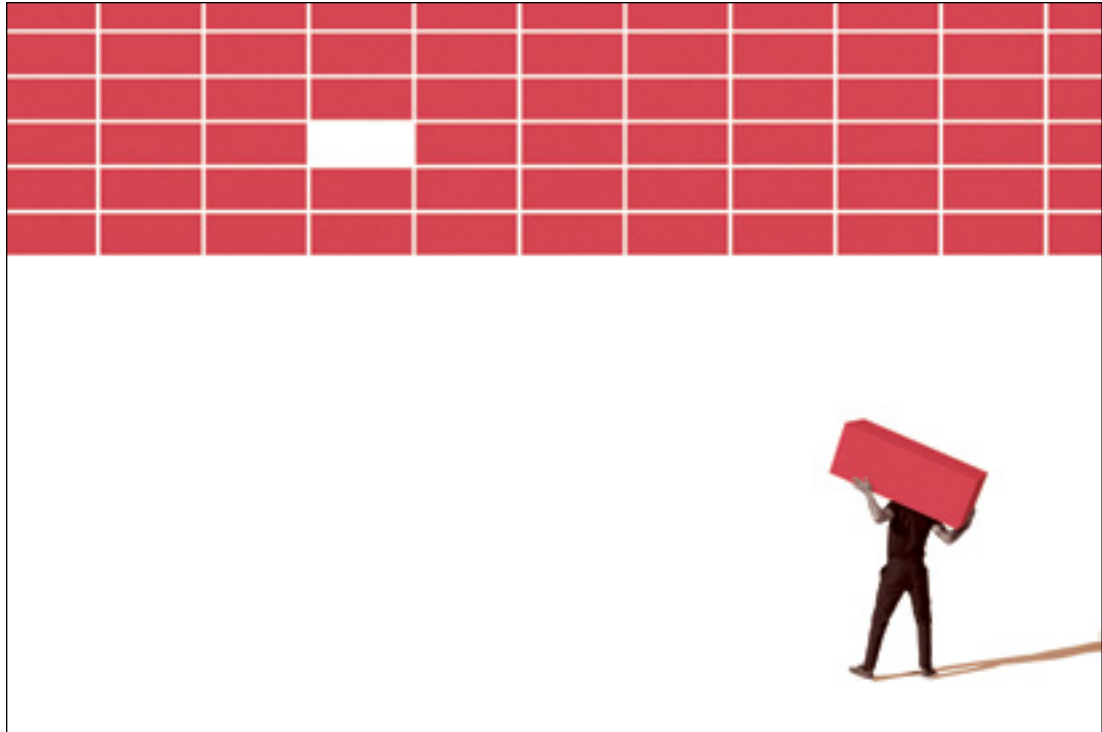
So how do you do this consistently? How do you get momentum when it's not there? There's a cycle to it. I call it "The Success Cycle." We did a deep dive into "The Success Cycle" recently during the "Unleash the Power Within" virtual event. Here is the abridged version for you to consider.

"The Success Cycle" is a virtuous cycle. The more you succeed, the more you want to succeed, and the more you find a way to succeed through recognizing your potential, taking massive action, seeing the results, and having the belief or certainty that you will succeed.

If I ask, "What's the potential of any human being?" what would you say it is? How about: Infinite. Unlimited.

The challenge is many people buy into a belief that makes them more limited than their true capacity. Individual emotions often mess up the momentum we seek because they limit us and what's possible. When you're experiencing negative momentum, it's easier to fail than to succeed. It becomes a downward spiral. What happens is you go, "I'm going to gain all these new customers by doing this." And then your brain goes, "I've tried that before. It didn't work. I tried all these times." And so you lose your certainty. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Potential. It sounds simple, but to gain or regain momentum, you must first adjust what you seek to achieve to your beliefs and attitudes, which enables



you to see the potential. See the potential of what's possible rather than any barriers. Celebrate a positive — no matter how small — and upward momentum can follow. Stop telling yourself something is impossible. Accept the possibility of success.

Action. You don't weed your garden merely by thinking, "Weeds, go away!" Results require more than thoughts or words. They require action.

It may take time, patience, and overcoming a steep learning curve to accomplish something you have never tried before. You're not going to become a master overnight, but you can experience massive growth in a short amount of time with enough concentrated effort. Recognizing how the training effect works is one of the key factors for business success. If you know you'll eventually hit a plateau, have a plan in place to break through. That way, you'll keep your momentum and not get stuck, climbing even higher toward your set goal(s).

Results. To complete the cycle, you must accurately assess the results. We all tend to lose sight of what the results actually mean because we sometimes assume they're going to be bad. Take a step back. Be honest with yourself. Maybe bring in

an unbiased third party or neutral, unbiased method to evaluate your results. You may find your actions are misdirected or your desired results are wildly inaccurate — neither of which will ultimately lead you to business success.

A key to fueling the momentum in a success cycle is not quitting when things get hard. Never forget: The key to success in business is to keep going and continue to celebrate the victories, no matter how trivial they may seem in the moment. Rather than wait to reward yourself after you've lost 45 pounds and completed the Hawaii Ironman race, acknowledge your smaller wins along the way.

Set yourself up to win. This is what creates momentum. We build on success, not failure. And when your goal is about something greater than yourself, there's a level of grit inside you that can make the impossible possible with a bit of momentum. ■

TRENDS

Revamping the Return to Office

Avoid the clash over mandates and successfully bring employees back to their desks.

By Jan Bruce

For many companies, strict return-to-office mandates aren't working, resulting in resistance and even walkouts. We expected the return to the workplace to feel positive, a signal that we were back to normal times. However, mandates that include enticements, suggestions, penalties, and coercion do not necessarily address key ingredients for breaking the return-to-office stalemate: eliminating workplace incivility and building psychological safety, trust, and resilience.

Workplace incivility includes being ignored, having one's judgment questioned, and being addressed in an unprofessional manner. One in four workers experiences workplace incivility, fueling toxic work environments and posing a risk to psychological safety, according to meQuilibrium's latest survey. Disturbing but less common are angry outbursts or being yelled at, accused of incompetence, or teased by co-workers. meQ's study also revealed that on-site employees are 66% more likely to feel like mistakes are held against them, 56% more likely to say that people are rejected for being different, and 36% more likely to find it difficult to ask teammates for help.

To overcome the return-to-office stalemate, a fundamental reshaping of policies and office culture is necessary. Instead of relying solely on coercive measures, employers must prioritize trust and psychological safety and address workplace incivility.

An essential component is open and transparent communication. Employees should feel comfortable expressing concerns and fears about returning to the office. Leaders need to actively listen and be willing to adapt policies and protocols accordingly. By involving employees in the decision-making process, organizations



QUICK TAKE
Addressing workplace incivility is key.

can build trust and a sense of ownership, which can lead to a smoother transition back to the workplace.

Equally important is implementing comprehensive training programs that tackle workplace incivility head-on and promote a culture of respect by educating employees about the harmful effects of incivility and equipping them with the necessary skills to respond appropriately. By fostering a shared understanding of respectful behavior, organizations can create a cohesive and harmonious work environment.

We need to create a climate for people to “lean in” to the benefits of working on-site. This will help reduce employee backlash and give organizations a greater ability to bring employees back to the worksite. ■

Jan Bruce is CEO and co-founder of meQuilibrium. She helps global enterprises build resilience in order to change, grow, and succeed.

ALIGNMENT

A Call for Conscious Leaders

Learn to connect your soul with your role.

By *Eric Kaufmann*

The achievements, consumer evolution, and commercial productivity of our industrial world are remarkable. Yet, this productivity has also yielded very real costs in the forms of alcoholism, domestic violence, suicide, drug abuse and addiction, depression, and ever-expanding economic inequality. Driving these costs is the notion that we are living

QUICK TAKE

Becoming a conscious leader will help you tap into the wisdom and power around you.

machines that can be optimized for productivity and must separate our work from our personal life — separate our soul from our role.

I invite you to train yourself as a conscious leader by awakening your wisdom, love, and power. And as such, determine whether you are committed to leading from an

old model of ego-myopic leadership grounded in fear and insufficiency or an evolutionary, life-affirming, and personally fulfilling conscious leadership mode. The point of this mode is to have an impact, have fun, and drive results while living an authentic life.

Scaled industrialization promised democratized pleasure for the masses, new wealth, and easy access to material goods and comfort. To pull this off, we bought into a mechanical, competitive, never-ending demand to be productive. The leaders of the Industrial Revolution couldn't have predicted that the price of separating our soul from our role would culminate in workplace epidemics of stress, burnout, and pervasive disengagement. But separating our soul (purpose, personal values, and connections) from our role (productivity, competition, and authority) has been a brazen disregard of the universal fact that everything is interconnected.

Our life is only possible within a network much vaster than our individual self. The air we breathe and food we eat depend on our connection to Earth and the atmosphere. Our precious opinions are echoes of influences from family, culture, and tradition. Even our bodies are made of elements that came to Earth from ancient stars and supernovas



millions of light-years away; we are physically connected to the galaxies.

We exist within a network of material, chemical, energetic, and spiritual connections. But ego-myopic, self-centered thinking ignores the interconnection of all things and orients you toward leadership breakdowns. Whether you are a plumber, electrical engineer, or Fortune 500 CEO — you are a human being. Regardless of where you go, what you do, or who you do it with, you are always a human being.

Human beings are connected to community and spirit. We are soulful beings who source our purpose, passion, and love from community and spirit. But when you separate your soul from your role and become wholly oriented to production and performance, you also orient toward depression, discontent, and burnout.

RESOURCES

Routing Employees to Recovery

→ You likely have employees suffering from addiction. Nearly 9% of all employed American adults have an alcohol or illicit drug use disorder, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Drug misuse and addiction cost American society more than \$740 billion annually in lost workplace productivity, healthcare expenses, and crime-related costs, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Resources like startyourrecovery.org can help employees to recognize if they have a problem, hear stories from people they can relate to, and explore local assistance and treatment options, including help finding rehab, support groups, and counseling.

Action item: Companies may want to consider sending a blanket email to all employees sharing resources like startyourrecovery.org for free, confidential help.

Terminology tips: To reduce the stigma around addiction, experts encourage the use of terminology that minimizes the negative connotations often associated with the disease, the Society for Human Resource Management suggests.

→ Instead of “substance abuse,” use the phrase “substance use disorder” or “substance misuse” to avoid the negative associations with “abuse.”

→ Rather than calling someone “an addict,” refer to the individual as “a person who is addicted” or “an individual with a substance use disorder.” ■

However, when you re-engage with your soulful aspect and decide to become a conscious leader, you lock back into the interconnectedness of all of life. You regain access to the wisdom and power that exist all around you, but are shut out by ignoring them. Being a conscious leader is a choice. It's a decision that you make: remain ego-myopic or become a conscious leader.

Being an ego-myopic leader generates leadership breakdowns on a personal level of unrealized potential, interpersonal level of soured relationships, organizational level of struggle and missed goals, or global level of social and environmental demise.

In our lifetime, church and government leaders are losing their moral and social authority, while business leaders are absorbing that authority. Business executives effectively combine the roles that kings, queens, priests, and priestesses once held. While you didn't volunteer for this, it's imperative to ask yourself whether you will continue to play the 250-year-old ego-myopic game or accept your seat at the table of history and show up as a conscious leader.

Gratefully, the Industrial-Age legacy of separateness is falling away. Life and work are becoming integrated and our well-being requires that we reconnect our soul with our role. As we become integrated, we can't help but look at the world from an expanded perspective: no longer temporary visitors who gobble up whatever they can, but stewards of this interconnected bounty. We are the descendants of a thousand generations before us, and we are the progenitors of the thousand generations ahead of us.

Being a conscious leader stops breakdowns at work, accelerates meaningful results, and is deeply engaging to your people. Training yourself to be a conscious leader is an empowering path toward more productive and more meaningful days. Now is the time to awaken as a conscious leader. This isn't a call for a future plan; it's an urgent call for awakening now. This is the moment to be bold in your efforts because your leadership is powerful medicine for your organization, community, and planet. ■

Eric Kaufmann is the author of *Leadership Breakdown*, a speaker and facilitator who focuses on conscious leadership, and a thought leader at Harvard's Institute of Coaching.

TRANSITIONS

Pick a Picasso

Follow this guidance to find your next career move.

By *Tamara Loehr*



Transitions are interesting. Some are forced, some are volunteered, but there are a few things that I've learned through experience.

➔ **Don't let your business be an extension of who you are.**

Make sure you keep true to your own identity — there are lots of people who sell their business and then they have money, but they're not happy because their business has been their life for so long. How do we blend that together so that we stay true to family, self, and all those things that are very important?

➔ **Resist rushing into what's next.**

When I was in my early 30s and single and didn't have children, everyone was asking, "When are you going to have children?" And then you have children and they say, "When are you having a second child?" It's exactly the same in business. You sell a business and they ask, "What's your next plan? What are you doing next?" Cherish the transition. Take

as much time as you need because the next thing you choose will be a seven-to-10-year journey, and that's a big chunk of your life. So, spend time on creating a list of what it is that you want to achieve. You are constantly evolving. In your 20s, you want to see if you can be an entrepreneur and grow a business. Then in your 30s, it's about wealth creation. You wonder if you could build and sell a business. What does it look like to raise capital and invest in other businesses? And it's constantly changing.

➔ **Take inventory of your toolbox.**

If you look at those past experiences as building blocks to the next thing, you're never starting again. Look at what you've got in your toolbox because in every transition, you have a heap of tools that you have gathered from the last seven-to-10-year transition. I write down what's important to me in life right now. For me, I got to a point where it was very much about impacting and stepping up. I never used to do broadcasts. I was happy being

in the background. Now, it's about being a role model and focusing on business as a force for good. So, what do you want to focus on for the next 10 years? What's in your toolbox?

➔ **Prioritize your values.**

What makes you most happy? What excites you? What are your key values? And does it align to that? Even if I get the most amazing opportunity presented to me, and everyone says, "This is going to make a killing," money isn't one of my values. Unless it ticks every single one of those boxes, it's a "no" from me. Your ability to say "no" to things is more important than what to say "yes" to. Your time is valuable, and this is the next seven to 10 years of your life, so make sure you're picking a Picasso. ■

Tamara Loehr is co-founder of Beusail Academy, a 2023 Real Leaders Top Impact Company and mentoring business for entrepreneurs, as well as a growth advisor, impact investor, and business mentor.

LESSONS

5 Steps to Become a Top 1% Leader

Here's how I've successfully led teams all the way to 300+. You'll be amazed at how simple it actually is if you follow these fundamentals.

By *Scot Chisholm*

01 Set a vision. You don't need to be Steve Jobs, but you need a vision to lead. Start small — three years is fine. Create a one-sentence description of where you want the team to be in three years. Explain it to the team, and get their feedback and buy-in. Refine as needed.

VISION STATEMENT

02 Create annual goals. Seems obvious, right? But most teams have no idea what their annual goals are. Create three (max) goals, one sentence each, memorable and measurable. Explain the goals to the team, get their feedback and buy-in. Refine as needed.

GOAL 1

GOAL 2

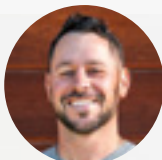
GOAL 3

03 Create individual goals. Now have every person on the team create individual goals. Their goals must align and support the team's goals. Meet to discuss their goals and refine them together as needed. Make sure they're not too easy or too hard. Come to a mutual agreement when they're finalized.

04 Review goals together. Set up a recurring, one-on-one meeting with each person on your team. It can be weekly or biweekly. Start the meeting by reviewing the goals you both agreed on. If they're behind, focus on ways you can help them catch up. If they're on pace, focus on ways you can help them crush it even more.

05 Praise and celebrate. Create opportunities for mini-wins. Break annual goals into monthly and quarterly targets. When someone makes progress toward a goal, give them praise. Celebrate when someone hits a monthly or quarterly target. Celebrate harder when the team hits its annual goals.

IDEAS FOR CELEBRATION



Scot Chisholm founded software company Classy (acquired by GoFundMe), serving as CEO for over 10 years and leading it to 300+ people and billions in platform donations. More recently he founded Haskill Creek, a new spin on the traditional pharmacy. He coaches founders/CEOs, helping them transition to high-impact leaders.



QUICK TAKE

Technology can help make the meat industry less harmful.

Meat Reinvented

Ivy Farm Technologies is revolutionizing the way meat is created — and it's a triple win.

To help address today's growing challenges in sustainable meat production, Ivy Farm Technologies is on a mission to become the United Kingdom's leading producer of cultivated meat. Founded in 2019, the company uses novel biotechnology developed at Oxford University to grow real meat in vitro. Currently in research and development, Ivy Farm Technologies has patents pending across a range of unique technologies.

Real Leaders chatted with CEO Richard Dillon about the innovative company's groundbreaking approach to meat, which could improve three key areas — sustainability, animal welfare, and human health.

***Real Leaders:* What woke you up to the problem of how meat is produced today, and what inspired you to become part of the solution?**

Dillon: I was a meat-loving consumer for years and I still am. There are a lot of great vegan and plant-based alternatives, but I grew up eating bacon, hamburgers, and hotdogs, so I have the taste for it. My oldest son, Jamie, opened my eyes to how destructive current animal farming is. He was at a brilliant school doing an immersion module on sustainability, and they touched on the food system. I distinctly remember I was in my kitchen and he asked me what I'm doing to help leave the world in a better place for his generation and future generations. It was a moment of "wow."

I've been super lucky to work with great companies like Procter & Gamble, Red Bull Energy Drink, and Lagunitas. But I had to think going forward, could I put those business skills to potentially better use and help to solve some of the bigger questions?

I was lucky enough to get approached by Ivy Farm to join its board and help drive the commercial strategy. Eventually I was asked to become CEO, and I just dove down that rabbit hole of understanding not only how destructive animal agriculture is — with around 80 billion animals and 2 trillion fish slaughtered every year — but also that it is unsustainable and takes a big toll on the world's resources. Once you go down that rabbit hole, it's tough to turn it off. It's tough to unsee it. So to lead a company that's trained to change that and be on the forefront of revolutionary innovation is pretty cool. That's how I got into it.



LISTEN UP

Catch Ivy Farm Technologies' full conversation with us on the *Real Leaders* Podcast.



WE ARE CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO. WE MAKE CULTIVATED MEAT, WHICH IS REVOLUTIONARY TO THE WAY THAT ANIMALS ARE FARMED AND MEAT IS CREATED TODAY. IT'S NEVER REALLY BEEN DONE.



RL: How is Ivy Farm Technologies being a real leader in the meat industry?

Dillon: We are challenging the status quo. We make cultivated meat, which is revolutionary to the way that animals are farmed and meat is created today. We're taking stem cells from animals, and we're looking for the 0.001% of cells that our technology can not only identify but then train and convince to keep growing outside of the animal — with no antibiotics used and no risk of salmonella, e-coli, or other food-based pathogens. It's never really been done.

RL: How will Ivy Farm Technologies take this to scale to make the greatest impact?

Dillon: Let's take a step back. Meat is one of the biggest success stories of any consumer goods sector in the world. It's been growing since the 1940s and booming year after year up to now, where 360 million tons of meat are consumed globally in a year.

Let me put that into context. The average American is eating about 265 pounds of meat per person per year. In Europe and the U.K., it's about 175 pounds. In China, it's down around 110 pounds.



In India, it's down around 45 pounds. I'm giving you these numbers because as China's middle class starts to boom, and even in India and other emerging markets, they're following the same path as the West. They're wanting more nutritious products, including meat. It's not only a source of nutritious input — it's also a bit of a status symbol.

The need for meat in the long term is only going one way. Meat is so enormous that I don't think there's a future where we can decentralize the production of it into your house or into restaurants. It's a bit like craft beer. Craft beer looks big, but the vast majority of beer is made in large, central breweries that consumers don't see because they can get the efficiencies and economies of scale and get it mass produced. I think that's the way that cultivated meat will have to go.

The majority of animal agriculture, of meat, is industrially farmed — huge cages, potentially indoor, massive lots of chickens, pigs, or cows. It's not Old MacDonald Had a Farm. They're not roaming around the meadow and dropping dead of old age. This is a factory, and they do it because of the efficiencies needed to get the costs down.

It's going to be the same for cultivated meat, but we can do it with a much lower footprint — about

92% less emissions, 90% less land, and 66% less water than traditional industrial beef farming. The future I see is large meat breweries that serve cities and are built a bit closer to cities. They take up less land, they're less intrusive, they're less smelly, and they will be closer to where the consumption happens. But I don't think in my lifetime I will see a countertop cultivated meat machine.

We have a broken, grim animal food system that is the second biggest contributor to greenhouse gases and the largest contributor in terms of sectors causing deforestation and freshwater pollution. So our business model is about challenging that status quo and then painting a better picture of the future.

Our pilot plant here in Oxford, U.K., is brewing meat — pure muscle and fat — and when we make this scale, it will produce meat much more efficiently and sustainably than farming is currently. Ultimately, that's my goal. I'm working with the amazing scientists and engineers at Ivy Farm alongside external suppliers, partners, nongovernmental organizations, and governments to generate action toward that better future. ■

—*Real Leaders staff*



Ivy Farm Technologies swaps the cleaver for the culture dish to produce more sustainable meat. It plans to sell its muscle and fat to other food producers and ultimately develop its own brand of products for consumers.

Sounds that Save

Eco-acoustics and artificial intelligence help stop harmful activity in rainforests.

When people call to mind the sounds of rainforests, they likely drum up ideas of peaceful rains, gently rustling leaves, and a chorus of vibrant wildlife. But there are also disturbing sounds that are not often heard or thought of — noises of intruders on paths of destruction.

Chainsaws illegally cutting down trees, hunters killing endangered species — this is the dark side of the human presence in these lush paradises. They can be challenging to catch in the act, as damage is often already done by the time authorities realize what happened.

That's where Rainforest Connection comes in. The nonprofit tech startup was founded in 2013 in San Francisco to help save trees and protect endangered species. They fashioned microphones and solar panels into a sound-monitoring system of “guardians” installed atop tree canopies to detect real-time threats, such as illegal logging and animal poaching, and alert local partners to intercede. “Guardians” are connected by the Global System for Mobile Communications or satellite to transmit audio to a cloud platform for instant analysis. They employ highly sensitive external microphones that capture ambient sound.

The nonprofit was built on three pillars to ensure success: creating hearty technology that functions in rugged conditions and remote areas; building close relationships with local nongovernmental organizations and tribes

QUICK TAKE
Sound-monitoring technology can help guard rainforests from harm and track biodiversity.

to work in cooperation as responders to threats; and securing a talented team of scientists to interpret the data collected into useful information.

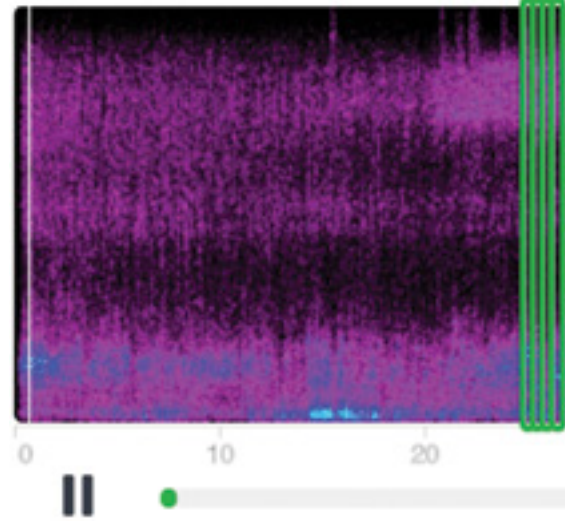
While the mission remains the same, the technology has evolved.

With the help of artificial intelligence and machine learning, the solar-powered bio-acoustic equipment has been trained to recognize over 22,000 sound examples with strong accuracy, including chainsaws, trucks, cars, and motorcycles. The company has installed over 580 “guardians” to monitor more than 1 million acres in 35 countries to date.

Rainforest Connection maintains that saving the rainforests is the most impactful way to stop climate change. After all, deforestation alone accounts for 17% of all global carbon emissions, the InterAcademy Partnership reports, and up to 90% of logging in tropical rainforests is illegal, according to the United Nations.

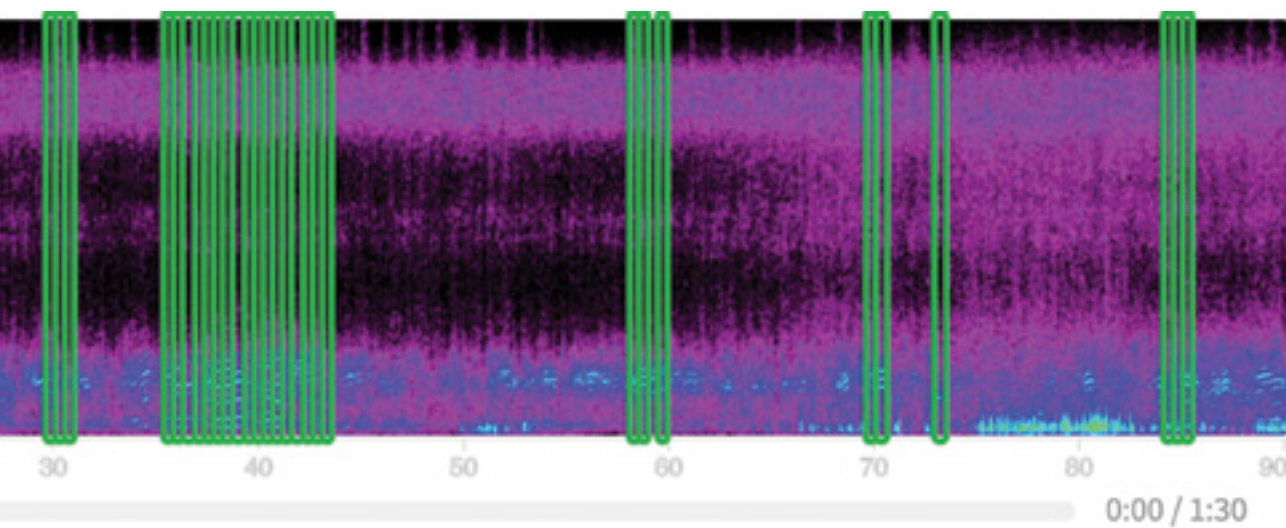
“Logging is a massive problem around the world,” Rainforest Connection CEO Bourhan Yassin says. “That's one side of what we do, this brute force way of trying to empower local people with technology to help protect their forests.”

Yet, Rainforest Connection doesn't stop there. The impact company found another helpful use of its technology: studying biodiversity. In fact, it's on a mission to create the world's biggest shareable, searchable Audio Ark of rainforest sounds and eco-data.



“As the world is shifting around us, the climate is changing, and we're all seeing the effects of that,” Yassin notes. “That has tremendous and very detrimental effects on biodiversity, and it's important for us to be able to understand what biodiversity health looks like so we can make the appropriate changes.”

“We use sound because most species are vocal to communicate, so sound is a very profound way to understand what species' sentiments look like, what species are doing, why they're calling, how often they're calling, and so on. So, it serves as a great way for us to use that technology to



Hear the sounds of rainforests around the world in real time on Rainforest Connection's app, available on Apple or Google Play.



understand what biodiversity looks like in hopes to protect it.”

The information can be used for land management, policy changes, and allocation of limited resources to maximize the impact of things like re-introducing key species to an area. For instance, in Puerto Rico, Rainforest Connection monitored two endangered species of parrots that its partners re-introduced to a reserve area, sharing sound alerts and activity patterns with rangers to help protect the parrots.

Yassin joined Rainforest Connection seven years ago, after spending the

beginning of his career in the for-profit space, working with startups in California and co-founding a successful fashion company in Dubai.

“I never really found the satisfaction that I needed in terms of doing something that had a great cause attached, that felt very meaningful, that I could talk about when I get old one day and feel proud of,” Yassin says. “So, I decided to make the shift to the conservation world and focus on doing something that had a great cause attached to it.” And it doesn't get much greater than saving the rainforests. ■

—*Real Leaders staff*



LISTEN UP

Hear our full conversation with Rainforest Connection on the Real Leaders Podcast.



QUICK TAKE
Social impact is a must
today, and trust is key.

The Trust Model

Adopt these three elements to build trust while working toward a sustainable future.

By *Jim Massey*

As environmental, social, and governance (ESG) topics become more relevant, more business leaders are asking how they can evolve. It comes down to trust and trying to help others understand that we can't afford not to be singularly focused on social impact.

The Trust Model is a premise I developed that focuses on three elements: Can, Care, and Do. For trust to be present, each of these elements must be present. Trust is the connective tissue that makes positive action possible, as it creates the building blocks for a successful self, team, and system.

Can

Leaders need to have clarity of their vision or purpose first, as this will enable them to be secure in their ability to tackle whatever issue or problem needs solving. This idea of "Can" allows leaders to try new solutions.

Understanding why you exist and taking care of it responsibly is the essence of "Can." "It can't be done" is something that companies say when they are focused on the wrong things.

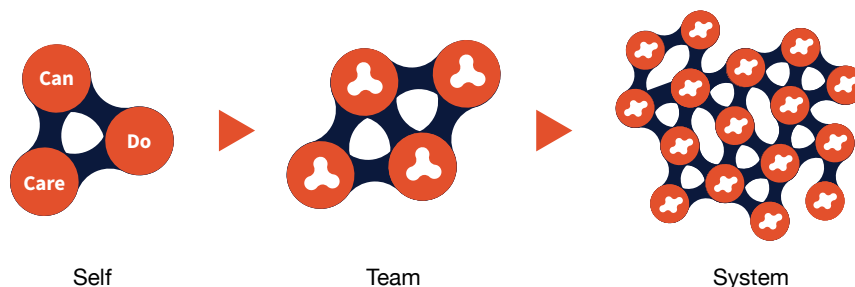
Many companies will say things like, "We follow these multiple Sustainable Development Goals. We're focused on driving inequalities. We're focused on eliminating homelessness and hunger." But when you look closer, none of these issues is directly tied to its core business. I find that broad approaches often show an immaturity in the company's sustainability program and commitment to making the most meaningful impact. In the end, a company is ignoring the fact that it is not actually addressing the existential problem that the business is contributing to most.

Companies are trying to be all things to everyone when they should really figure out why they exist first. Then,

Trust: Creating the Building Blocks of Action



When **Can**, **Care**, and **Do** come together, something interesting happens. Trust is formed. Trust is the connective tissue that makes positive action possible. It creates the building blocks for a successful self, team, and system.



Self

Team

System

demonstrate that they're capable, and find their purpose through that lens.

For instance, Orsted is ranked one of the most sustainable energy companies in the world, and it stays at the top because it demonstrated that it can. Orsted used to be one of Europe's largest oil, gas, and coal extractors, with 85% of its power coming from fossil fuels. It was a true power conglomerate. Today, it has made a commitment to 85% power from renewable sources by 2040, and not only that, it hit its target 20 years ahead of schedule. It has even committed to net-zero emissions by 2040.

Care

Leaders need to demonstrate that they and their company will engage, listen, and take actions that benefit those who depend on them, balancing company profits with impact. Employees, customers, communities, and investors want companies to be successful, just not at all cost. Leaders and companies must show that they care about people and our planet when they do business.

For example, when my wife and I had our first child, we had a difficult time conceiving. Anyone who has

struggled with fertility knows that in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatments are expensive, and the process can be heartbreaking and exhausting.

Fortunately, at the time I was working at Johnson & Johnson (J&J), and insurance covered most of the IVF treatment. We ended up only paying a nominal fee. When we welcomed our first child into the world, I also had plenty of time off for parental leave. My wife, on the other hand, was working at another company, and she got no more than the minimum legal requirement. In fact, she ended up using her vacation time, sick days, and taking some unpaid leave just to have the time she wanted after the baby was born.

Everyone was shocked at the benefits and paternity leave that were offered to us from J&J. To me, this wasn't surprising. Johnson & Johnson is a baby company; it's part of why they exist. They made sure that their benefits were spectacular because healthy babies are part of their purpose and something they care about.

Some companies care about people, and others don't. In today's business environment, if companies want to retain their employees, they're going to have to do more than just offer them a raise. The

largest generation in the workforce today, Millennials, are overwhelmingly looking to join companies that offer equity, transparency, and purpose. Employees are looking for ethical companies that value them and do good, and on the flip side, consumers are looking for companies that make a positive impact, and at a minimum are not doing harm to people and the planet.

We no longer can afford to focus solely on quarterly returns and investors. For quite some time, shareholders ruled, yet the evidence is clear. We need to move from worrying just about our investors and how business operations are affecting money to worrying about how we're impacting our planet and people — employees, customers, partners, supply chains, and communities.

Do

Leaders and organizations must turn aspirations into operations and walk their talk. To make sense of the chaos, humans create systems. Since we created these systems, we can fix them and potentially use them to regain society's trust.

Corporate sponsorships have long been a way that companies leverage their "Can" and "Care," but in today's business arena, that is not enough. Consumers, employees, and other stakeholders are expecting organizations and leaders to walk the walk, take action, and simply "Do." Business is one of the only remaining systems where society still places trust, but even that trust is fragile.

Case in point: Many people were outraged when they discovered that the world's top plastic polluter, Coca-Cola, was sponsoring COP27, the United Nations climate meeting. They accused the soft drink company of greenwashing. Many saw this move as a dishonest attempt at hijacking the green movement for public relations opportunities in lieu of making any real changes to its operations.

TRUST IS THE CONNECTIVE TISSUE THAT MAKES POSITIVE ACTION POSSIBLE, AS IT CREATES THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SELF, TEAM, AND SYSTEM.

Coca-Cola issued a statement saying, "We are prepared to do our part and have set ambitious goals for our business, starting with helping to collect and recycle a bottle or can for every one we sell — regardless of where it comes from — by 2030. ... In 2020, we signed a joint statement urging United Nations member states to adopt a global treaty to tackle the plastic waste issue through a holistic, circular economy approach. ... Our support for COP27 is in line with our science-based target to reduce absolute carbon emissions 25% by 2030 and our ambition for net-zero carbon emissions by 2050."

COP27 was requested to drop Coca-Cola as a sponsor, but Coca-Cola remained, though they did not participate in the meeting. While individuals at large may not have been able to influence Coca-Cola to put its money where its mouth was that time, I hope that individuals inside and outside of Coca-Cola will hold its leaders accountable for fulfilling its commitment to do good.

In a time when many are rapidly losing trust in our institutions — whether in government, society, or finance — it's more critical than ever that leaders cultivate their ability to build trust by focusing on Can, Care, and Do. ■

Jim Massey is the author of *Trust in Action: The Leader's Guide to Act. Right. Now.* He is chief sustainability officer at Zai Lab and former vice president of ESG Sustainability, Ethics, and Compliance at AstraZeneca.



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An M&A firm led by a founder who was not satisfied with the exit of his previous business demonstrates how a prudent industry can be a powerful force for driving impact.

Rob Follows has diligently worked for two decades as founder and CEO to build the M&A firm he wished existed when he exited from his former business. His vision has manifested in STS Capital Partners, a unique M&A sell-side advisor focused on making “Extraordinary Exits” possible.

The story of STS is a deeply personal one that begins with Follows selling his marketing and strategy company in 1992 for 27x EBITDA. While he was initially thrilled by the sale, that changed when he discovered the buyer would have paid 300% more for it.

More interestingly, it wasn’t the fact that Follows had generated less value that disappointed him; it was the missed opportunity to give back by using that additional upside to contribute to charitable organizations.

Follows vowed to give other entrepreneurial business owners the advice and expertise that he needed, which is why he founded STS Capital Partners.

STS Capital Partners is a global M&A firm that offers expert guidance to entrepreneurial business owners who are on the journey to an extraordinary exit — which is an exit where a client achieves maximum financial value and creates legacy potential. STS makes that a reality for its clients by selling their businesses strategically to the people who buy strategically.

STS also has the goal of creating billions of dollars in new philanthropic and impact capital through M&A. This goal is reflected in the name of the firm since STS stands for Success to Significance through Selling to Strategics. The company has helped hundreds of clients fulfill bigger ambitions in life and leave lasting legacies by inspiring charitable contributions.

On the milestone 20-year anniversary of STS Capital Partners in January 2023, Follows announced he had scaled from CEO to chairman of the firm.

As chair, Follows devotes his efforts at STS to work closely with clients so he can support more “Extraordinary Exits.” He also plans to give back more through his new role. “I want to encourage philanthropy. Whether that’s giving more time to Altruvest Charitable Services or supporting STS’s company-wide objective of creating billions of dollars of new philanthropic capital, that’s what I look forward to,” says Follows.

Altruvest is a Canadian charity founded by Follows that trains corporate leaders and then matches them to charity board positions to strengthen those organizations and their capacity to deliver community services. To learn more about the foundation, please visit altruvest.org.

Over the past 20 years, Follows has helped thousands of entrepreneurs achieve maximum value, and his passion is unwavering. He says he wants to continue living by the same advice he gives his clients at STS Capital Partners, which is to leave a lasting legacy and to “give while you live!”



Rob Follows is the founder and chairman of STS Capital Partners, a global M&A firm specializing in sell-side advisory. If you are a private business owner with annual revenues of \$50 million to \$2 billion and interested in a complimentary strategic valuation, reach out to him at rob@stscapital.com.

**BY 2030, THE WORLD WILL SUFFER
FROM 560 DISASTERS A YEAR — OR 1.5 A DAY,
THE UNITED NATIONS PREDICTS.**

→ **QUICK TAKE**

The call to invest in prevention is even more crucial due to climate change.

Redoubling Risk Reduction

UN member states commit to accelerate resilience-building in the face of rising disasters linked to climate change.

Representatives from the United Nations (UN) member states midterm review meeting in New York last May have agreed on a greater commitment to resilience building. The renewed effort comes in the context of rapidly rising disaster risks, which the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) is predicting will reach 560 disasters a year — or 1.5 a day — by 2030.

At the meeting, the UN member state thought leaders said resilience must be the foundation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by addressing “resilience deficits” across all goals, ensuring a balance between people (social resilience), planet (environmental resilience), and prosperity (economic resilience).

“If we are to achieve the SDGs, it is vital that we act to build resilience through our societies and governance models,” said Amina Mohammed, UN deputy secretary-general. “Otherwise, poverty and inequality will continue.”

The two-day high-level meeting included a midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015-30, an international agreement among UN member states that maps out how to reduce global disaster losses.

With climate change impacting more frequent, extreme, and unpredictable weather events, and geophysical hazards taking thousands of lives, the UNDRR says the Sendai Framework has become

Takeaways from the UN Midterm Review Meeting in New York

➔ Disasters are reversing global development. Urgent action is needed to build resilience into every decision we make.

➔ Growing inequities and pressures on the planet are reversing hard-won development gains.

➔ Humanitarian needs are also rising, as disasters and conflict create enormous human suffering.

➔ The UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023 highlights how resilience can be strengthened to withstand and respond to shocks.



Access the report: undrr.org/gar/gar2023-special-report

more relevant. The representatives agreed through a political declaration that a redoubling of efforts to reduce risks and build resilience is needed.

“As risks are left unattended, disasters are materializing faster, surpassing our ability to cope, and with increasingly dire consequences for people, livelihoods, society, and the ecosystems on which we depend,” said Mami Mizutori, special representative of the secretary-general for disaster risk reduction and head of UNDRR.

“I can’t overemphasize the need to scale up implementation of the Sendai Framework for our own collective resilience,” agreed Mwanahamisi Singano, who represented the Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism Women and Gender Stakeholder Group and Women’s Environment and Development Organization. “Disasters are not natural and know no borders.”

The political declaration calls for countries to embed risk reduction in all investments and development decisions and to bolster resilience, especially for the most vulnerable countries and groups. The Sendai Framework identifies investing in disaster risk reduction as one of its priority actions. In response, UNDRR has intensified its work in this area by helping countries access more financing for prevention, as well as helping the public and private sectors to de-risk investments and reorient financial flows for increased resilience.

The UNDRR focuses on:

- **Identifying gaps in public spending** by tracking/tagging disaster risk reduction (DRR) expenditures and conducting risk-sensitive budget reviews.
- **Increasing transparency and data** on private sector DRR actions and strategies and enabling investors to incorporate this information in their decision-making process.
- **Developing new and innovative financing models** for DRR investment, such as blended finance instruments and prevention/resilience bonds.
- **Ensuring financial institutions and banks align** their strategies, operations, and activities with the Sendai Framework by revising credit assessment practices.
- **Leveraging the full potential of the insurance sector**, not only for disaster risk protection but also for encouraging risk prevention.

During the New York meeting, the value of disaster risk reduction was brought home to attendees by Mustafa Kemal Kiliç, a student who survived the February earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria. “I am here today because our building did not collapse — because our contractor applied high standards to make our building earthquake resistant,” he said.

Prime Minister Mark Anthony Phillips of Guyana said that the main challenge is limited technical and financial resources available to invest in disaster risk reduction.

“Financing is driven by reactive investment post disaster, all of which hinder investment,” added Tonga’s Prime Minister Siaosi ‘Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni. “We need more investment toward the underlying drivers of risk.”

Findings of the Midterm Review

During the meeting, the UNDRR released its midterm review, stating that eight years into its implementation, many disaster lessons have been ignored. The official report states, “Progress has stalled, and, in some cases, reversed.”



Bright spots in the review include that 125 countries now have national strategies for disaster risk reduction and that mortality rates are lower during disasters than they were, thanks to improvements in early warnings in some countries. However, half of the countries still do not have multi-hazard early warning systems, and the number of affected people is increasing.

“This midterm review is our last chance before 2030 to collectively change course,” said Csaba Kőrösi, president of the UN General Assembly, who chaired the high-level meeting. “Starting today, I challenge you to account for risk in every decision that impacts how we live, consume, build, and invest.”

“As we look to the 2023 SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future, it is time to make a dramatic shift from managing disasters to managing risk and investing in prevention. People are depending on it,” said Mohammed. “We need to work together — member states, investors, business, civil society, and the entire UN system — to ensure the clauses contained in this midterm review are woven across all of our agendas.” ■

About UNDRR and the Sendai Framework

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) leads the coordination of disaster risk reduction in the UN system. It consists of five regional offices that work with national and local governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector. UNDRR envisions a world where disasters no longer threaten the well-being of people and the future of the planet. It maintains that sustainable development cannot be achieved without building resilience.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-30) aims to achieve a substantial reduction in disaster risk and losses by the year 2030. It works hand in hand with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.



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Good News, Bad News

CEOs and boards worldwide show strong support for DEI, while middle managers struggle to keep up.

Top leaders are showing increased support for and investment in DEI, despite today's climate of economic and political uncertainty.

That's according to the third annual Inclusion and Diversity Impact Report released in July by World 50 Group, which examines the perspectives of members from a large executive community of senior-most leaders responsible for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), managing 7 million employees.

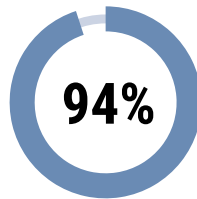
QUICK TAKE
DEI momentum is particularly strong in large companies.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) have increased their organization's investment over the past 12 months, despite today's climate of economic and

political uncertainty. Direct reports to the CEO were most likely to feel they have access to sufficient talent as well as support from their board, CEO, and other C-suite leaders. But only 41% of respondents — a decline of 8% from 2022 — said that middle managers were supportive. This highlights the need for improvement in middle-management support.

"This year's survey shows DEI investments are steadily rising, demonstrating both commitment and understanding among large businesses," says Jennifer Bird Newton, World 50's chief impact officer. "However, continued focus, transparency, constant communication, and accountability are necessary for lasting I&D change."

Momentum for DEI initiatives remains particularly strong in larger companies



According to the third annual Inclusion and Diversity Impact Report released in July by World 50 Group, 94% of respondents are tracking employee representation.



Download the report: world50.com/impact

(above \$50 billion in revenue) and is further validated by the 81% of leaders who said their DEI budgets had either stayed the same or increased during this period. This is a 15% increase from companies that said they had sufficient funding for such efforts in 2022. Another notable fact is that 59% of leaders also reported having sufficient talent to support their DEI initiatives, a 6% increase from the previous year.

The report — a strong barometer for the ongoing significance of DEI — offers additional insights, including the critical fact that companies are beginning to align on DEI measurement:

- ➔ 94% of respondents are tracking employee representation.
- ➔ 78% are measuring workforce inclusion and belonging, which is down by 4% from last year.

Other insights include:

- ➔ 26% of respondents who said they had seen an increase in momentum said it came from leadership pressure.
- ➔ 41% of those reporting directly to the CEO said their DEI budgets had increased.
- ➔ 81% of respondents said their senior-most DEI leaders report either to the chief human resources officer (69%) or CEO (12%), compared to 59% and 19%, respectively, in 2022.



“THIS YEAR’S SURVEY SHOWS DEI INVESTMENTS ARE STEADILY RISING, DEMONSTRATING BOTH COMMITMENT AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG LARGE BUSINESSES.”

— JENNIFER BIRD NEWTON,
WORLD 50’S CHIEF IMPACT OFFICER

Growing Concerns Over Backlash

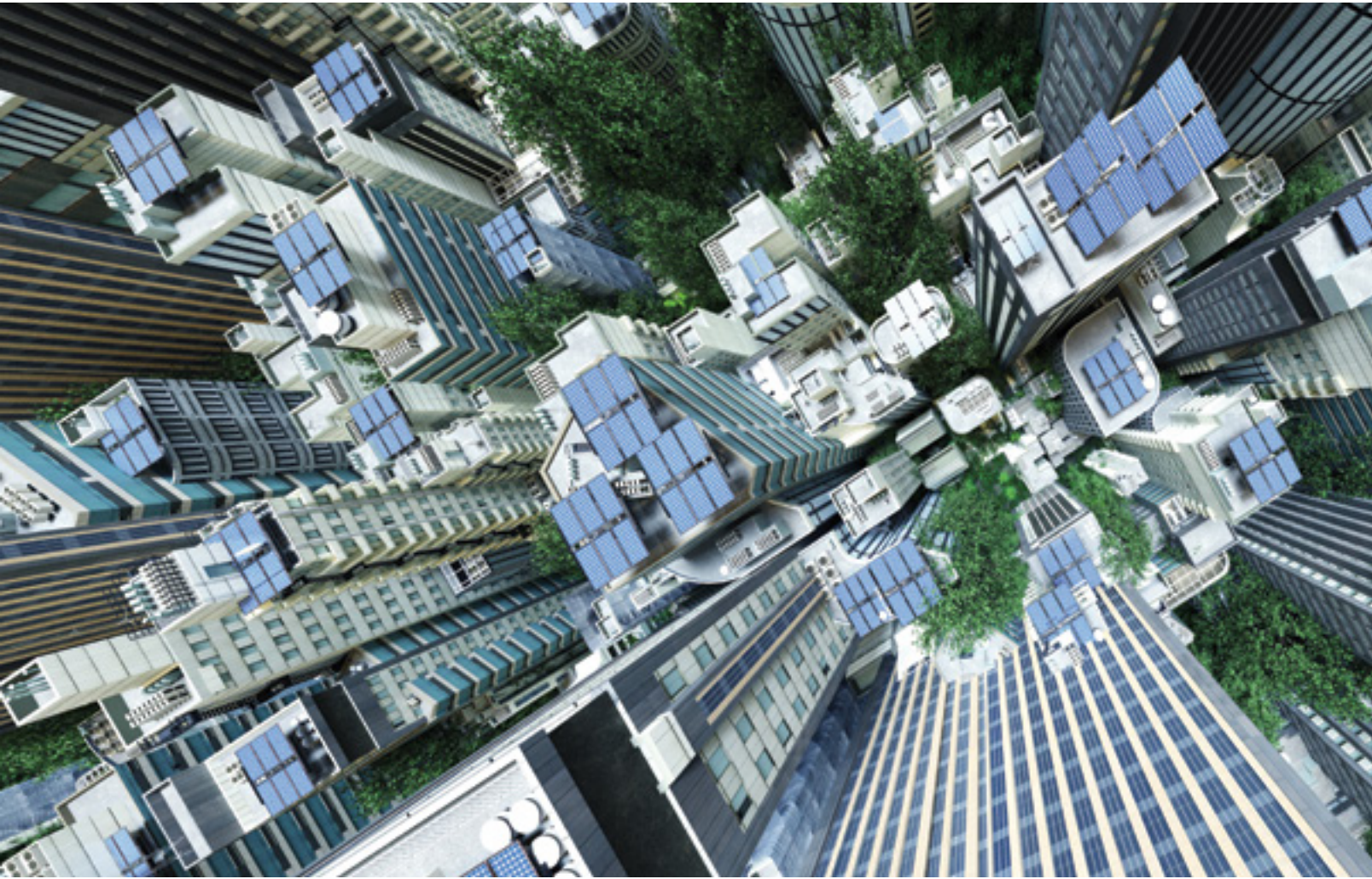
Despite the increased momentum of DEI, a considerable proportion of respondents (22%) identified their initiatives as “low” on the maturity scale this year compared to prior years. This critical assessment of maturity reflects the confluence of social, political, and economic pressures — along with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling striking down affirmative action policies — which are increasingly bringing new scrutiny to the depth and breadth of corporate commitments.

While 62% of respondents said they do not think their leaders are effectively held accountable for DEI results, that number decreased to 53% among those who directly report to the CEO.

These findings underscore the need to establish accountability measures from the top down — and their impact on driving lasting change.

“We are at a critical inflection point for DEI,” says David Wilkie, CEO of World 50. “What is evident is that those who are committed to this work are getting the support and resources they need to move forward. Building cultures of belonging takes time, and while there is still much work to be done, we are encouraged by the progress we continue to see.” ■





It All Became Clear

A commercial real estate agent's defining moment inspired her to launch a planet-focused business.

Peering out the window of a high-rise condominium building in San Francisco, Carolyn Pistone was horrified as she watched an oil tanker that had crashed into the San-Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge spill massive amounts of oil into the Bay. It was this defining moment 10 years ago that crystallized the trajectory of the commercial real estate agent's career.

"It's one of the things that got me so concerned about the planet and really thinking about how business can help," Pistone says. "I saw probably 200-300 tankers over the next several days go in and out of the Bay dragging all that oil with them, the oil still pouring out. ... I thought, as humans we've long put ourselves above all else. ... Now we have put commerce above all else, and we're

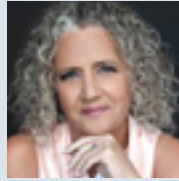
being very bad stewards of the Earth. So that got me thinking that looking at commerce for commerce's sake is not how I want to focus my business or how anybody else should focus their business — that if you're providing a service or product, it should be to the benefit of all."

Commercial buildings as we know them are harming the planet, consuming 35 percent of the United States' electricity and generating 16 percent of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Pistone recognized the need to do better, so she founded Clear Blue Commercial in 2014.

The 2023 Real Leaders Top Impact Company is a full-service brokerage, sustainability, consulting, and project management company dedicated to helping the environment through real estate.

QUICK TAKE

Commercial buildings can harm the planet, but Clear Blue Commercial is flipping the script by helping the environment through real estate.



“SUSTAINABILITY IS THE ESSENTIAL BUILDING BLOCK OF THE NEW ECONOMY.”

through sustainability practices that decrease energy and water usage, saving over 30 million gallons of water so far in the small community around its Petaluma headquarters and saving clients over \$250,000 in green upgrades and energy savings in two years. “We’re not looking to just make more money,” Pistone states. “We’re really looking at: What’s our impact? What have we accomplished?”

The company’s green programs include turf and LED conversions, solar panel installations, electric vehicle charging stations, and battery storage. For instance, Clear Blue Commercial negotiated a power purchase agreement with a solar services provider that allowed a large-scale government facility to install a comprehensive photovoltaic system (solar power) with no upfront cost. In another example, the company led the largest recorded one-day lawn-to-mulch conversion of a commercial property, turning 64,000 square feet of lawn into drought-tolerant landscaping and saving a business park 1.6 million gallons of water a year. By partnering with community groups, governments, local agencies, and environmental action networks, Clear Blue Commercial’s collaborative model serves as an inspiration for others.

“These projects continue to save greenhouse gas emissions and resources even after we’ve completed them, so our impact becomes cumulative,” she notes. Next up, Pistone plans to grow Clear Blue Commercial’s customer base statewide and increase its positive impact tenfold because, as she says, “It’s all about the impact.” ■
—*Real Leaders staff*

Clear Blue Commercial became a Certified B Corporation in 2016 and a seven-figure business in 2019 — another example of a company profiting while doing good.

“We have integrated transparency (clear), sustainability (blue), and the triple bottom line (commercial) into all of our policies,” explains Pistone, founder, president, and managing director of Clear Blue Commercial. “We know that in order to be truly sustainable, we need to consistently focus on our clients’ bottom line as well as our own. We have made it our mission to prove that sustainability more than pays for itself. It is the essential building block of our new economy.”

The California-based company helps reduce the carbon footprint of commercial buildings

**LISTEN UP**

Listen to our full conversation with Clear Blue Commercial on the Real Leaders Podcast.



SVN Helps Establish Junior Achievement Center in Maryland Community



For over 35 years, our mission at SVN® has been to create amazing value for our clients, our colleagues, and our communities.

We believe in the power of shared value to create positive change in our communities, which is why our **Shared Value Network**® extends across all of our service lines, offices, and the communities where our Advisors live and work.

From a tired shopping center to a state-of-the-art facility for financial literacy and workforce readiness, the Perdue/Henson Junior Achievement Center is a story of two organizations coming together for the greater good of the community.

SVN | Miller Commercial Real Estate played a pivotal role in transforming a Maryland community through a unique partnership that had a profound impact. SVN Advisor John McClellan sold Oak Ridge Church (ORC) a shopping center in 2006, where they had been renting space for their church. Over the next 12 years, SVN was able to maintain almost full occupancy with market-rate tenants while allowing the growing church to expand into some of the vacant spaces for additional ministries.

In 2018, an anchor tenant left the center, and ORC saw an opportunity to make a difference in the community beyond their church activities. With the guidance of SVN, ORC submitted a proposal to the Junior Achievement (JA) of The Eastern Shore, offering a rental structure that was 65% below the pricing for other existing or new facilities. JA was seeking a space for their

proposed Junior Achievement Center, which would bring an innovative, life-changing new facility to the community. ORC's proposal was accepted, and the JA Center was established in the vacant space, becoming a beacon of hope for the community.

The impact of this partnership is far-reaching, **with over 10,000 students from a nine-county area benefiting from the program** every school year. The Center is designed to increase graduation rates, soft skills, economic growth, opportunities, social mobility, confidence, and financial stability, benefiting the community as a whole.

In the next ten years, over 100,000 students will have the opportunity for a life-changing educational experience, and Salisbury, MD will join a prestigious list of 58 cities across the US that have such an incredible facility.



This is **SHARED VALUE** in action. This is the **SVN DIFFERENCE**.

Getting in Step with the Earth

Prota Fiori pioneers eco-friendly luxury footwear.



Jennifer Stucko created Prota Fiori as an eco-conscious luxury women's Italian shoe brand. She built a supply chain from scratch that is better for the planet.

Prota Fiori's shoes are stylish, classy, and downright gorgeous, worn by A-list celebrities like Naomi Watts, Julianne Hough, and Selena Gomez. However, what makes the budding women's luxury Italian footwear brand unique extends far beyond what meets the eye.

For a hint, look to the name: Prota Fiori means "to protect the flowers." Founder, CEO, and creative director Jennifer Stucko explains that it's a feminine nod to the company's mission to design environmentally conscious shoes while preserving Italian craftsmanship and paying homage to her Italian ancestors.

Stucko's longtime love of shoes and Italy initially led her to work for Italian luxury fashion houses Giorgio Armani, Valentino, and A.Testoni, where she gained over a decade of commercial and operational experience in supply chain and luxury footwear manufacturing. But then she learned about the less glamorous side of fashion: its toxic impact on the planet. Combined, footwear and apparel account for about 8% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, Quantis reports.



"I became very interested in climate change and sustainability and learning about how the fashion industry was the second largest industry contributing to the problem, and I thought to myself, 'Now that I have this knowledge, how can I trailblaze a better path forward with my expertise, my beliefs, and my roots? What can I do to make a difference?'" she says.

She started dreaming up Prota Fiori in 2018 from her home in New York City and launched in 2019 as a public benefit corporation. Through research, experimentation, and grit, Stucko created a way for multi-generational Italian master artisans to design and produce luxury shoes that blend certified, premium-quality circular materials from Italy's supply chain with the Italian know-how to design stunning shoes in a new, innovative way.



“Most of fashion’s toxicity lies in the supply chain,” Stucko shares. “My hope is that by pioneering a new way to produce luxury footwear and promoting conscious consumption, we will reduce fashion’s devastating environmental impact on the planet. This passion has driven me to build the supply chain from scratch with the support of my Italian relationships, endlessly taking the train to various regions of Italy where they specialize in different textiles to meet with suppliers and manufacturers to find the undiscovered possibilities, challenge the traditional mindsets, and pave a new way of Italian shoemaking.”

Creating high-quality shoes with a sustainable ethos wasn’t her only challenge. Prota Fiori became fully operational in April 2020 — amid the COVID-19 pandemic, with scarce financial resources, and at a stark funding disadvantage as a woman founder (typically, 98% of venture capital funding goes to men). Nonetheless, Stucko persisted, raising approximately \$1.5 million in capital, primarily from women and minorities.

By 2022 things were turning up roses, with Prota Fiori reaching tenfold growth over 2021 thanks in part to new partnerships with major retailers Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus, as well as increasing consumer demand.

“Now we have international retailers interested in the brand,” Stucko notes. “It’s really exciting to be a world leader in this category and to have our authentic values aligned with what the world needs most right now more than ever.”

Stucko put in a significant amount of legwork to ensure that Prota Fiori is as

Prota Fiori’s Environmentally Conscious Supply Chain

MATERIALS

Upcycled apple skins, sugarcane, and molasses

BENEFITS

Reduces methane emissions contributing to climate change by rescuing apple (derived from the post-production of apple juice and apple jam products) and agricultural residuals waste from landfills

Chrome-free metals

Eliminates toxic chemicals, helping ensure workers’ well-being, resulting in high-quality brass

Regenerated vegetable-tanned leather

Turns leather straps from tannery waste into a reusable material finished with natural tannins, creating a restorative cycle

Vegetable-tanned leather

Eliminates toxic chemicals and toxic water waste using natural tannins

Recycled cardboard

Extends the lifecycle and repurposes cardboard into a circular material with fibers from sustainably managed forests

Recycled EVA rubber

Combats plastic pollution for marine and human health by rescuing waste from landfills and extending the life cycle

Biologic silk

Reduces water impact and allows for cleaner air by recovering wood and pulp into a renewable resource and by not using GMOs, pesticides, or herbicides

Recycled polyamide

Diverts waste from landfills — production uses much fewer resources than virgin nylon (including water, energy, and fossil fuels)

in step with the Earth as possible. Her accomplishments include B Corporation Certification, a partnership with the United Nations where she also fulfills 10 of its Sustainable Development Goals, and a partnership with Treedom planting a citrus garden with full-circle environmental, social, and governance benefits.

Also, over 85% of the materials applied to the footwear are sustainable and have several certifications, including

USDA Biobased Product, Global Recycle Standard, Global Organic Textile Standard, Silver Rated Leather Working Group Certification, and Oekotex Standard.

Prota Fiori’s hand-sewn, bow-adorned heels, sleek boots, and dainty flats are taking a leading stance for responsible luxury footwear design and production in the fight to protect the Earth — yet Stucko’s work is far from over.

“Luxury footwear is just my starting point,” she declares. “If we can convince the consumer, the retailer, the media, and the celebrity to believe in what we believe in through inspiration, education, and impeccably made shoes, change will happen. It takes all players in the industry to collaborate to make systematic change.” ■

—*Real Leaders staff*





Speak with Impact: 6 Burning Qs Answered

These public speaking secrets will help CEOs be more effective.

By James Rosebush

Every CEO who aspires to be a real leader needs to speak with impact. This includes calls with investors and the media, talks with board members and employees, and major speeches to large public audiences. When I was tapped to lead President Ronald Reagan's White House Office on Impact and as chief of staff for first lady Nancy Reagan, I entered a "zero-error zone" for public communication. The global media was watching and listening 24/7. In returning to the private sector, I have put these White House lessons to the test as a public speaker myself, including before large crowds and more intimate settings on podcasts, radio, and TV shows. Along the way I wrote a bestselling book, *Winning Your Audience*, and have been asked to coach many corporate leaders, heads of family offices, start-up executives, and serial billionaires, as well as fundraisers and sales personnel. These sessions have helped focus, transform, and give confidence to tentative public speakers and helped them connect with their audiences in an impactful way. Here are my answers to six burning questions I have often been asked. I hope they help you.

Q: WHY AM I MORE NERVOUS TO SPEAK IN FRONT OF A SMALL GROUP THAN A LARGE CROWD — AND WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Probably because you care more. With a small group, there is more personal eye contact, whereas with a large crowd, faces and personalities often fade. In this case, you need to up your confidence and focus on the content rather than the size of the audience. If you reach one person with your message, you can count it as a win. Recently, I was asked to speak to a crowd of about 60 people, many of whom I knew personally. As I surveyed the room, I felt I was just not reaching anyone. Well, that was just fear and doubt raising its head. Afterward, the leader of the group approached me and said she could have listened to me for hours. How we see and hear ourselves is rarely how individuals in the crowd see us. So, let it go. Stop personalizing your presentation. Let the content deliver. Small or large crowd — it never matters.

Q: WHAT IS THE BEST STRUCTURE FOR A GREAT SPEECH?

This is one of my favorite questions. A speech is like great architecture. It has a foundation, an interior, and the final statement. In your outline, start with why you are speaking about a particular theme, then tell the audience you will share with them four points that support your theme (these are the floors of the building), and conclude with a statement that wraps it all up. But never forget how President Ronald Reagan ended every speech. He asked something of his audience. He sent them out thinking about what they could do. That always made a lasting impact and a connection between the speaker and the audience.

Lessons from Queen Elizabeth II

I had the pleasure of connecting with Queen Elizabeth II over 25 times through the years. I learned many lessons from her that have become staples in my communications strategy and coaching. When she was in San Francisco for a state visit, she invited a small group of us to have dinner with her at the famed Trader Vic's restaurant. She came over to me during cocktails and asked what I was drinking and then started quizzing me on how she could use the HP computer I had arranged to be a gift to her from the American people. Genuine curiosity was the hallmark of her communication — and it was not stiff or pretentious, though few would know that from watching her from afar. The next night, I was invited to her private suite on The Royal Yacht Britannia where she and Prince Phillip gave me two gifts: a signed picture of both of them and gold cufflinks, which I cherish to this day. These are two skills she practiced that will help anyone communicate better: curiosity about others and gratitude for what people have done for you.



WHITE HOUSE PHOTO OFFICE

1984

Left: James Rosebush briefs the Reagans prior to the arrival of a head of state to The White House.

Center: Rosebush manages the multilanguage translation sound system for a summit meeting Nancy Reagan hosted in the East Room of The White House for first ladies from around the world.

Right: Rosebush is blessed by Pope John Paul II in his private quarters at a private summit with Nancy Reagan at the Vatican.



Q: WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES IF I WANT MY SPEECH TO MOVE PEOPLE TO ACTION?

Be inspiring and illustrate how other people have successfully taken on an issue. People like stories about other people who have accomplished something they themselves would like to tackle. Tell stories about heroes. This makes people want to be like them, and it gives them courage to act themselves. Another way is to factually and accurately state the problem that needs to be addressed. This is where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has set the bar. He inspires people with his own heroic leadership — being willing to die for his people and his country. I would follow his example — even on a topic with much less urgency and consequences. Don't just tell other people what they should do. Give an example of how you have done it yourself — how you have made the sacrifice.

Q: I AM INTROVERTED. IS IT NECESSARY FOR A LEADER TO BE GOOD AT GIVING SPEECHES? WHAT ARE SOME EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVES TO GETTING MY MESSAGE ACROSS WITHOUT STEPPING ON A STAGE?

Ah, to be an effective leader is to have successful communication skills. Accomplishments or goals without the ability to communicate them effectively is a zero-sum game. And we see much of this today. To be introverted is just to be self-focused rather than other-focused. If you are or will be in a leadership role, there are effective ways to be coached out of this trap of being self-consumed. It's time to shed this handicap, and you can do it. Your voice is needed in any leadership role. Sure, you can broadcast, tape, or write messages to your constituency, but ultimately some sort of immediate problem is going to catch you. Look at

the CEO of Boeing when his two planes went down. He lost his job for numerous reasons, among them because he could not communicate adequately his sorrow over the accidents and his concern and care for the families who suffered tragically. Abandon self. You can do this.

Q: WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE COMMON MISTAKES THAT SPEAKERS MAKE?

Great question! **1. Speaking too long.** Remember, no speech should be more than 21 minutes generally speaking. That is when the audience runs out of listening ability. Before one audience, I spoke for an hour and 15 minutes, and only because I sensed the audience was right with me and wanted to hear more. I was shocked to have received a standing ovation, rather than being booted out of the hall. Better to stick with the short approach and leave them wanting more.

2. Never or rarely talk about how



1985

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAMES ROSEBUSH

great, smart, or accomplished you are or how much money you have and spend on philanthropy, race cars, etc. I am serious. I have heard speeches like this, and I wanted to walk out.

Grandiosity is deadly. Never use the first-person singular when speaking. Never say, “I did this and that,” but rather say, “We did this,” or “Our team did this.”

3. Never call for questions following your speech. The audience didn’t come to hear other people in the audience. They came to hear you. If you do, then you are creating a runway for people in the audience to even pivot your points to theirs. People in audiences can be grandstanders using the opportunity of your speech to disagree or to throw you off with a curve ball. Agree to speak to anyone following your address in the lobby or an adjacent room. One time not long ago, someone stood following my talk and asked me to comment on Leo Tolstoy’s homage to President Abraham Lincoln.

Oh my. My talk was about leadership, but I surely did not know that Tolstoy had written about Lincoln. This was an attempt to belittle my talk and underscore the intelligence of the person in the audience.

Q: WHEN IS IT BETTER TO READ FROM A PREPARED SCRIPT VERSUS TO SPEAK CANDIDLY FROM YOUR HEAD AND HEART?

I can relate because I often vacillate on this issue. In fact, I gave a keynote speech on “The Radical Disappearance of Global Leadership,” and since it was a serious speech laced with quotes from Winston Churchill and others, I elected to write out my speech. Sometimes, it’s good to do this if you think your speech might be published or if you may be asked for a copy of your presentation. However, audiences naturally may be more responsive when you deliver your remarks with eye contact and spontaneity, as opposed to looking down at a script the

entire time. Possibly the best approach is hybrid. That is, make notes in outline form that you can refer to. As long as you are knowledgeable about your topic and you can glance at your outline, you should be good to go. It’s always good to have the crutch of an outline in front of you — even if you have memorized your speech — because a million things can distract you. This keeps you on course. ■

James Rosebush is founder of the Intersection Impact Fund, author of three bestselling books, frequent public speaker, and CEO of GrowthStrategy Inc., a corporate and family office advisory firm. He was tapped to start and manage the first White House Office on Impact, was the longest-serving chief of staff to first lady Nancy Reagan, and was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to serve as U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO. One of his more fulfilling assignments has been to coach executives and leaders to speak like the “Great Communicator” Ronald Reagan.



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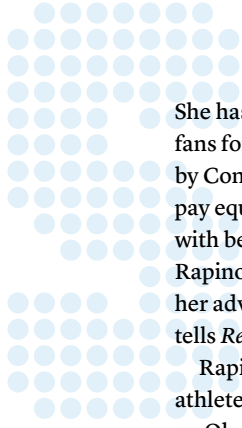
MORE

EARNERS

**RETIRING SOCCER MEGASTAR MEGAN RAPINOE
KICKS UP HER FIGHT FOR EQUALITY IN THE
WORLD ARENA — AND SHARES WHY
BUSINESSES HAVE NO EXCUSE BUT TO
CLOSE THE GENDER PAY GAP NOW.**



BY KATHRYN DEEN



She has been cheered from the stands by pro soccer fans for 15-plus years. She has been called upon by Congress to testify in a historic fight for gender pay equality. And she has become synonymous with being a disruptor on both world stages. Megan Rapinoe may be hanging up her cleats this year, but her advocacy work is far from finished. In fact, she tells *Real Leaders* that she is just getting started.

Rapinoe will retire as one of the most influential athletes on the planet with two World Cup titles, an Olympic gold medal, and a Presidential Medal of Freedom, and one of the first soccer players to publicly come out as gay. Now, Rapinoe is taking the field for gender equality in full force and is kicking up her activism efforts for LGBTQIA+ rights and racial justice.

Known to passionately speak her mind, Rapinoe reflects with *Real Leaders* on her leadership lessons from the game, why businesses have no excuse but to close the gender pay gap now, the impact company she recently launched with her fiancée, WNBA legend Sue Bird, her desire to make politics “cool,” and a whole lot more. Rapinoe’s new chapter is shaping up to be her most impactful one yet, and in true Rapinoe fashion, she is embracing it with arms wide open.

Real Leaders: Congratulations on your upcoming retirement from pro soccer. How did preparing for and competing in four World Cups, including as co-captain in 2019, transfer into your leadership strategy in business?

Rapinoe: When you’re playing on a team that has been as successful as the U.S. Women’s National Team where you’re literally playing with and against the best players in the world all the time, you need to have a level of even aspirational confidence in yourself and your teammates. If you’ve made it to the World Cup on the Women’s National Team, you’ve run the gauntlet. You’ve been in a pressure cooker. You’re resilient.

I apply these same qualities — confidence, teamwork, performance under pressure — to leadership in business. For me, I was born with this amazing talent to be an athlete. Just as I grew into a leadership role on the team and tried to be the best player I could be, I’m trying to leverage these skills off the field as well.

Being a leader on a team or in a business means you have to be accountable to yourself and to your teammates. I’ve always been a team-first player, and that definitely carries over to my businesses outside of soccer. I want to be successful, of course, and I want everyone to be successful with me, and I want to be

successful with them. I don’t think individual success actually exists, and the foundation of that belief came from playing on the biggest stage with my teammates. You need everyone to really win at anything.

RL: You helped lead the charge in the U.S. Women’s National Team’s class action gender discrimination lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation, settled in 2022 with a promise for equal future pay with the men’s team. How is this affecting employee equity in business today? How would you characterize the progress that has been made, and what will it take to reach equal gender pay everywhere?



Rapinoe: We're definitely experiencing a paradigm shift in how we understand the value and potential of women, which has been undervalued for so long.

The Equal Pay Act became law six decades ago, and yet we still hear the statistics: Women make 82 cents for every dollar a man earns. For Black women and women of color, the gap is even greater. The wage gap has hardly moved in 15 years. It's absurd. It's not acceptable or sustainable, and finally it seems like enough people are starting to say "enough" — whether that's U.S. women's soccer, protesters, investors, or employees.

Our victory as a team was really momentous for women's soccer and for all of women's sports and the

“

I want to push people and companies to re-imagine the status quo. We obviously need more women in leadership positions. We need more gay and trans people in leadership. We need a bigger commitment to pay equity and inclusion. ”

”





LIFE

Saucy
Feminist
That Even
Men
Like

by Germaine Greer

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Vantage
drop-out cigarette
announces a
nicotine breakthrough.

VANTAGE



New Vantage Menthol
the first cigarette that lets you get up high tar without
losing the cool, moist menthol pleasure.

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09





Megan Rapinoe and her fiancée, WNBA legend Sue Bird, recently announced their retirements from sports and co-founded A Touch More production company to give a voice to underrepresented groups.

equal pay movement, but the average person doesn't have the platform — much less the bandwidth or the ability or the freedom — to engage in a fight like we did. We need to ensure all working women and all marginalized groups are being paid equitably. As chief equality officer for Trusaic, my goal is to use my platform to bring awareness not only to the problem — because we all know by now that there's a problem — but also to talk about the solutions.

And it's not just about compensation, although obviously being paid fairly is important. For the team, it was also about equal investment and equal caring — that's equal access to resources, investment in coaching, marketing, ticket sales, sponsorship, all of it. In a corporate setting, that looks like equal access to opportunity — who gets the new assignments, the great projects, who gets additional training and development, and who gets promoted.

One thing I believe is that you have to create a space that signals to people that it's safe before they even enter that environment. Maybe that's diversity training, but it's also: What are your hiring practices? How diverse is your workforce? Who do you do business with? What does your executive suite look like? Does everyone look exactly the same? Because that's not going to signal to other people that there's space for them there.

The pressure's been turned up. We know investors are looking more closely at companies and their workplace practices, employees want to work for companies that pay fairly, and customers want to do business with companies that do the right thing. So the pressure is coming from a lot of places, and industries and companies should also put pressure on one another. There should be an element of holding their feet to the fire in this. Legislation and legal action are obviously part of that pressure too.

Companies hold the key to closing the wage gap. There are no longer any excuses. At this point, we have enough information and the tools, like Trusaic's PayParity technology, for companies to get on the other side of this in a real, meaningful way.

RL: As a mission-oriented leader, what are your personal and professional missions right now?

Rapinoe: My professional mission while I am still playing is to be the best teammate and the best player I can be and to leave the game in a better place for the next generation of players.

My personal mission is to use my platform to fight for gender equality, LGBTQIA+ rights, racial justice, and equal pay. I hope to inspire others through my advocacy and actions to join the fight for equality and justice and help create a more fair and inclusive world.

I am very selective about who I work with, and value alignment is something I take seriously in business. I became chief equality officer last year for Trusaic, which I know your publication recognized earlier this year. (Trusaic was a 2023 Real Leaders Top Impact Company.) They are a workplace equity technology company focused on achieving pay equity, which is obviously very close to my heart. And, of course, I'm involved with my own businesses as co-founder of A Touch More, the production company my fiancée, Sue Bird, and I have formed together to really change what kind of stories are being told and who is telling them.

RL: Speaking of co-founding A Touch More with Sue Bird, what are you learning about yourself and each other in this process?

“ I don't think individual success actually exists, and the foundation of that belief came from playing on the biggest stage with my teammates. You need everyone to really win at anything. ”



Rapinoe competed in four World Cups, helping the U.S. win in 2015; and in 2019 as co-captain, top scorer, and best player.

Rapinoe: A Touch More was actually created early in the pandemic as an Instagram Live show really just for fun. We had games and different guests. Sue produced the show and it was a blast. It really became about creating community in new ways under unprecedented circumstances. There was so much heaviness, and we just wanted to be a light however we could, even if it was just for a few hours.

So we kept that title for the production company, and our goal now is to create content that centers on stories of revolutionaries who move culture forward. If we can get eyes on these stories, we can broaden the cultural understanding of what it means to move in the world and to be successful when you don't look a certain way or fit a certain mold. We want to partner with people and organizations and brands who want to do the same kind of thing: uplift the culture through powerful narratives.

We've never had any qualms about working together professionally. This experience just reinforces that we're really passionate about the same things. We probably appreciate each other's unique strengths even more, and we can pick each other up in those areas where the other one might fall short. It's really cool to work with someone you love to advance your shared vision for the world. I truly think Sue's brilliance is one of her most underrated qualities publicly.

RL: Do you and Bird have any other projects in the works together?

Rapinoe: In terms of future projects, activism is probably always going to be at the heart of what we want to do. It's what we both have always believed in as individuals, so it makes sense. We've both had these really influential platforms as athletes, and we know the impact we can make on the world together. It's not about our story and our personal success. Everyone's heard our story. We want to get eyes on things that we feel are really important and not getting enough attention, and we have the resources between us to turn up that light.

RL: What areas of your work and mission excite you the most?

Rapinoe: I'm really fueled by the opportunity to make a difference for the young athletes who look up to me, for women in the workforce, for trans kids, for marginalized groups that deserve to be championed and to be seen and heard.

I'm excited about finding ways to get more people interested and invested in politics to make politics "cool," not necessarily in the traditional sense, but actually getting people to understand that politics is



In 2022, Rapinoe became the first soccer player to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor for U.S. civilians.

engaging with you, whether you're engaging with it or not. So those could be the decisions that your school system, city government, and insurance company are making. If people realize that when they participate in politics at whatever level, then policies will better reflect the needs and desires of their communities. We can impact our ability to live a better life by being a little bit more involved. If we take the time to understand all the issues we can have a say in, we can hold our elected officials accountable, so that's a big mission of mine.

RL: How can you leverage your personal brand as an advocate for the businesses you align with?

Rapinoe: Many of the brands that approach me do so because they feel a connection to what I'm doing on the field or what I'm doing and saying off the field, probably some of both. So that might be finding a way to win or to push yourself to the highest level or taking a stand for things that matter — justice, equality, fairness. I'm obviously not shy about putting myself out there, and so I imagine the brands that want to work with me and the brands I want to work with feel the same.

For me, it's how can I leverage my personal "brand" — who I am — for good? How can I make a difference? I'm fortunate to have people who do pay attention to what I say, so I feel a responsibility that comes with that — a responsibility to do what I can

with that influence and try to make the world better, whatever that might look like.

RL: You've spoken publicly about impact investing. What led you to commit to it?

Rapinoe: Values apply to every aspect of your life, not just some. My personal financial advisor and firm are really committed to impact investing. We definitely want to be successful and make money, but we also want to think about a new path forward. Doing the same things obviously isn't working. I like to invest in companies that are disruptive and progressive and concerned with making a difference in people's lives. My goal is to keep doing this. My portfolio includes Mendi, which is run by my sister, Rachael, and makes CBD products for athletes; Real, which is a mental health startup; and STATSports, which makes wearable technology for athletes.

We are just getting started in this space. There will be more to come. I want to continue to carve out a path for women — who don't acquire as much capital — to come together and build for everyone.

RL: Whose leadership has inspired you the most — in sports or otherwise?

Rapinoe: My biggest influence on leadership is my mom, Denise Rapinoe. She has always been the leader of our family and like so many women, has

EQUAL PAY DAY



Rapinoe helped lead the charge for gender pay equality in U.S. pro soccer. She is also standing up for LGBTQIA+ rights and racial justice.

worked tirelessly her entire life to provide for her family, herself, and anyone who needed her. My mother gave me the strength to be who I am today. She taught me how to stand up for what is right, fight for myself, and fight for others who need a helping hand. I absolutely would not be the person everyone knows today without her leadership.

RL: What is your definition of a real leader?

Rapinoe: A real leader is someone who is confident and accountable and creates an environment where everyone feels seen and heard and like they have a place on the team. Being a leader is about being faced with the choice to make the right decision for the greater good and actually choosing it every time. A real leader is not afraid to challenge the status quo to make positive changes within their company, industry, or the world. I don't think there's one right leadership style. It's about serving the person next

to you and the people around you and giving them what they need. Real leaders need to make a point of understanding the people they lead and then being intentional in their actions to support them and bring the very best out of them.

RL: What's next for you?

Rapinoe: Knowing this year would be my last in soccer, I've just tried to really enjoy every moment and appreciate what a special opportunity I have had playing for so long. I'm so grateful for everything this game has given me and so honored to have represented my country for so many years, and it, of course, has opened up many other doors.

I definitely want to continue to use my platform to expand the conversation. It would be irresponsible of me not to. I want to push people and companies to re-imagine the status quo. We obviously need more women in leadership positions. We need more gay and trans people in leadership. We need a bigger commitment to pay equity and inclusion. It's easy for everyone to say they agree with this until it comes time to actually invest in or hire or promote someone who doesn't look like you. We've made some progress, but we certainly have a long way to go. I think a lot about how we can break down these barriers and open more doors for women, Black people and all people of color, gay people, and the people who live in intersecting spaces and have so much perspective to offer all of us.

I'd like to continue to be involved in more projects that get people energized about the civic process and more active in their communities. I don't think enough people get involved when it's not literally their skin in the game, but if you look at the intersectionality of everything, it is all of our skin in the game, so I hope to encourage people to speak up or to take positive action. The most important thing for anyone is to do something — and you don't have to do it perfectly. You don't have to have all of the answers, but don't be scared into inaction because you don't think you have it exactly right.

I feel strongly that the business of Megan Rapinoe can go in all kinds of different directions. I have a lot of irons in the fire. Soccer will always be that touchstone for me, but how can I use that foundation to enter other spaces? That might be fashion, technology, investing, or who knows? We're just getting started. ■

Kathryn Deen is managing editor of *Real Leaders*.



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—ERICA DHAWAN

“‘HIGH LEVERAGE LEADERSHIP’ HELPS CEOS FOCUS ON THE MOST IMPACTFUL THINGS — TO WORK ON THE BUSINESS AND NOT IN THE BUSINESS.”

—SCOT CHISHOLM

“THE BEST APPROACH IS TO SCALE THREE PILLARS IN PARALLEL: YOU, YOUR LEADERSHIP, AND THE BUSINESS. YOU MUST OPTIMIZE ALL THREE PILLARS TO REACH YOUR FULL POTENTIAL.”

—ERIC PARTAKER

Get to know 10 effective executive coaches you can access today.



Coaching is a growing area of interest for our readers. Know a stellar executive coach? Send us their name and contact details at info@real-leaders.com.



The right coach can help propel you and your business to the next level. They can maximize your potential and see where your blindspots and growth opportunities are. When you improve, so does your company and your ability to make an impact. If you're not yet working with a coach or if you are seeking a better match, here are some of today's accessible executive and business coaches.



Brenda Bence

COACHING 25 years

EXPERTISE Peak performance coach for C-suite executives, primarily CXOs within major multinational corporations that have international or global remits, managing multiple regions and/or continents.

SWEETSPOT Helps senior leaders excel and thrive at the highest levels of organizations; has a strong command of international issues and how to lead globally

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Member of the Global Executive Committee for a \$1-billion global brand for P&G; one of the top five leaders of a \$2-billion-dollar fast-moving consumer goods business; served as independent board member of a publicly traded company in Thailand; served as advisor to board chairs and CEOs of publicly traded companies on the NYSE, NASDAQ, London Stock Exchange, and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange

IMPACT WORK Coached many heads of sustainability for large corporations, as well as leaders who have areas of responsibility involving the environment/energy; coach and speak on DEI and unconscious bias topics; coached and trained women in leadership for over a decade; as a coach and Global Certified Speaking Professional, worked across multiple nationalities, cultures, religions, and sexual orientations in the past 20 years; member of the Singapore Institute of Directors; taught trade courses as a member of the Thailand Institute of Directors

PUBLISHED 11 books on leadership, branding, and coaching; articles in over 400 publications globally

WHERE TO FOLLOW LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X, brendabence.com

focus and clarity

“There are so many challenges being faced by C-suite executives in today’s fast-paced, ever-changing world. Some of the most critical issues I am seeing now are the rapid pace of change driving high levels of uncertainty, talent shortage, geopolitical issues impacting supply chain, and keeping up with technology. There is no ‘one size fits all’ strategy to respond to these key challenges because each company and every executive is unique and the circumstances are different. However, there are two key focal points that can help: Focus on what you can control, not what you cannot control; and get clear on a broad vision for the future.”



Scot Chisholm

COACHING 15 years

EXPERTISE Startup founders/CEOs

SWEETSPOT 10 to 100 people, or \$500,000 to \$50-million businesses; focuses on "high-leverage leadership," which helps CEOs focus on the most impactful areas for success

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Led Classy from formation to billions of dollars in donations, eventually acquired by GoFundMe; advises the GoFundMe and Classy executive team; helps lead mergers and acquisitions

IMPACT WORK Led the transition from C Corp to B Corp for Classy, one of the largest technology B Corps in the world and a repeat Real Leaders Top Impact Company; coaches the CEO of OWL ESG, a data/software-as-a-service company servicing the ESG space, taking an AI-driven approach to improving ESG data across the industry

PUBLISHED Newsletter for first-time founders; launching a series of online courses helping founders with everything from startup operations to fundraising

WHERE TO FOLLOW LinkedIn, Instagram, firsttimefounder.com

high-leverage leadership

"A lot of founders struggle to transition from the early, scrappy building phase to becoming a CEO that can scale the business — and scale with the business. 'High-leverage leadership' helps CEOs focus on the most impactful things — to work on the business and not in the business. This frees up their time, empowers their team, and reduces the chance of burn out. And the business has a much higher chance of succeeding if the founder is able to lead this way."

Erica Dhawan

COACHING 15 years

EXPERTISE 21st-century communication skills including executive presence, storytelling, structured thinking, communication in person and virtually, negotiation, inclusion, and persuasion

SWEETSPOT As a former Harvard researcher and Indian immigrant, has specific experience training senior executives across the globe including Asia with a distinct understanding of culture and gender differences

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE CEO of Cotential

IMPACT WORK Helps social impact organizations reimagine how they connect intelligently to bring in new business or customers; helped impact companies reach underserved communities by transforming their offices into community spaces; helped a brand give away its IP for non-competitive use for sustainability reasons; worked with nonprofit organizations including Habitat for Humanity and American Cancer Society

PUBLISHED Books *Digital Body Language* and *Get Big Things Done: The Power of Connectional Intelligence*; viral New York Times op-ed "Why Ignoring a Text Message or Email Isn't Always Rude"

WHERE TO FOLLOW LinkedIn, Instagram, ericadhawan.com

pursuing improvements

"C-level clients' challenges today range from managing hybrid teams, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence impacts to business, culture change, sustainability, and supply chain challenges. Supporting senior leaders can help sustain improvements aligned with their business strategies. For executives to reach their goals, they need to have a 'why' that is emotionally compelling, do fewer things but better, adopt and stick to habits that point toward their goals, and take on a mindset and attitude that will sustain them."



Allison Dunn

COACHING 10+ years

EXPERTISE Founders and executives of privately held companies

SWEETSPOT From startups valued at \$1 million to established enterprises worth \$1 billion, helps create great places to work, which fosters employee satisfaction and productivity; over 25 years of ownership and executive experience in manufacturing and professional services

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Owner and CEO of Deliberate Directions since 2013; previously marketing director of Nobis Engineering from 2001-11, having had ownership in the company's Employee Stock Ownership Plan

IMPACT WORK Deliberate Directions is a B1G1, Business for Good (B Corps), Lifetime Partner since 2017; collectively, B1G1 businesses have created over 300 million giving impacts, from planting hundreds of thousands of trees to providing millions of days of access to life-changing opportunities

PUBLISHED 150+ episodes of the "Deliberate Leaders" podcast

WHERE TO FOLLOW LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, deliberatedirections.com



strategic planning

"C-level executives face challenges in scaling their businesses, planning succession, developing long-term strategies, governing effectively, managing capital, and devising exit strategies. These challenges are best addressed by gaining a comprehensive understanding of each executive's unique situation and then leveraging strategic planning, resource optimization, and problem-solving to create tailored solutions that are client focused and results driven."

Charles E. Gaudet II

COACHING 14 years

EXPERTISE Helping seven- and eight-figure CEOs create sustainable and predictable growth with better sales and marketing strategies

SWEETSPOT Significant growth and breaking sales records, even in economically challenging times

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Founded a business nominated by Ernst & Young as "One of the Nation's Best Seed-Stage Companies;" at 24, founded his first multi-million dollar business; continued to build and grow companies until 2010, when he started Predictable Profits

PUBLISHED SWEET *The Predictable Profits Playbook*, "The Beyond 7 Figures Podcast," and several articles in the press

WHERE TO FOLLOW Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, X, predictableprofits.com

sustainable growth

"C-level executives typically ask themselves three questions: 'How do I grow my company faster? How can I create more predictable revenue in our company? How can I make the company less dependent on any one person (including myself)?' The Predictable Profits Operating System addresses these problems with three main components — setup, sales, and scale — and nine subcomponents that have been the biggest drivers of continued successes."



David Lesser

COACHING 35 years

EXPERTISE Coaching CEOs; empowering leaders to discover their gifts, strengths, and talents and create the most conducive setting to express them

SWEETSPOT Guiding people through transitions in careers, relationships, and skillfulness to find purpose, fulfillment, effectiveness, and contentment

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Formerly CEO of a \$100-million, London-based real estate and construction group and executive director of a \$40-million worldwide not-for-profit operation

IMPACT WORK Coached leaders of 501(c)(3) and B Corporations; work with Real Leaders

PUBLISHED The Numina Blog; Numina coaching app on Apple and Google app stores; Numina Self-Guided Transformation Retreat on Amazon; interviewed on the podcasts “City Confessions” and “The Big Move” and by *Elle* magazine

WHERE TO FOLLOW LinkedIn, Instagram, numina.team

tactical transitions

“I find everybody’s challenges can be understood as a transition of one kind or another, from an old mindset that no longer serves to a fresh mindset that enables the person to empower their people more potently. The challenge is to see the people in your team — to really see who they are and what makes them tick, to see qualities of character in them that they have not yet seen for themselves — and then to let them know that you see them. To guide someone through a crucial transition, I find we need to be clear about these steps: 1. the want or intention; 2. the obstacle or pain; 3. the catharsis or realization; 4. the go-forward commitment or action.”



Ari Meisel

COACHING 11 years

EXPERTISE Helping entrepreneurs and executives become more replaceable, covering areas of leadership, communication, business optimization, personal productivity, and mindset

SWEETSPOT Supporting businesses across all stages and industries, from pre-revenue to billion-dollar enterprises; giving people back their time

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Filled the roles of CEO or COO for a dozen companies

IMPACT WORK Involved with several impact organizations, including a health care startup in Bangladesh, a company combating food insecurity, and numerous first-responder organizations

PUBLISHED 12 books, including *Less Doing, More Living, The Art of Less Doing, The Replaceable Founder, and On Productivity*; produced 500 episodes over an eight-year span for the “Less Doing” podcast; recently launched the “Everlasting Business” podcast

WHERE TO FOLLOW LinkedIn, Instagram, X, Facebook, lessdoing.com

reaching replaceability

“Many of my clients struggle with feelings of overwhelm and a lack of transparency. They often find themselves becoming bottlenecks in their own businesses. It’s important to make them — and everyone in their organizations — more replaceable to facilitate smoother operations.”



Heather Monahan

COACHING 5 years

Expertise Sales and leadership; mostly coaches around revenue generation and advancing leaders

SWEETSPOT Working across many industries, gleaming best practices and spotting trends; 20-year background in media exposed him to various industries, from health care to automotive and beyond; over the last five years as a consultant and coach, worked with C-level executives in technology, petroleum, and the financial industry

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Over 14 years, was advanced from vice president of sales to executive vice president of sales to chief revenue officer; during her tenure, doubled the company's annual billings from \$100 million annually to more than \$200 million annually in a declining marketplace; founder and CEO of her company, as well as a board member of Healthlynked Corporation

IMPACT WORK Maintained a board position with City Year Miami for a decade working to elevate inner-city youth; worked closely with her client Virtual Intelligence Briefing to launch its initiative of giving back by bringing clean water and resources to those in the most impoverished regions globally

PUBLISHED Self-published the book *Confidence Creator*; Harper Collins Leadership published *Overcome Your Villains*; podcast "Creating Confidence with Heather Monahan"

WHERE TO FOLLOW LinkedIn, heathermonahan.com

customized advancement

"Every client is facing different challenges based on their own unique growth trajectory, industry, experience, and team. It's important to fully understand their current business model, challenges, and goals before offering strategy and insight. A customized approach to each individual ensures that their needs are met and goals are delivered promptly."



Eric Partaker

COACHING 10+ years

EXPERTISE CEO coaching and mentoring: helping CEOs scale companies and leadership while unlocking full potential

SWEETSPOT Coaches from experience in the trenches; rapid execution, blitzscaling, people management

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Advised Fortune 50 CEOs since with McKinsey & Company; was a CEO for most of career, creating and growing a restaurant chain over a 13-year period

PUBLISHED *The 3 Alarms*

FOLLOW ON LinkedIn, ericpartaker.com

scaling successfully

“Scaling successfully is a timeless challenge. Time and time again, CEOs struggle not because they don’t know what to do, but because they fail to sequence and/or focus properly, try to do too much themselves, fail to zero-in on their zone of genius (and delegate or eliminate the rest), and/or don’t build a high-performing results-focused team. The best approach is to scale three pillars in parallel: you, your leadership, and the business. You must optimize all three pillars to reach your full potential.”



Julia Pimsleur

COACHING 8 years

EXPERTISE Scaling, leadership, mindset, sales, and working with boards and multiple stakeholders on managing up; trained neuro-linguistic programming coach

SWEETSPOT Women entrepreneurs looking to grow their businesses, make significant shifts and overcome limiting beliefs

C-LEVEL EXPERIENCE Built a multimillion-dollar business in the language teaching space from scratch and sold it; the direct-to-consumer multimedia company helped millions of young children to learn a second language on any screen of any size anywhere; raised \$6 million in venture capital

IMPACT WORK Started a social venture that is part for-profit, part nonprofit called Million Dollar Women; The nonprofit is Million Dollar Women Fund, which raises money from foundations, corporations, and individuals to have funds available to help women of color entrepreneurs who typically make less money and have less access to capital to take her programs for half the cost; graduated 100 women of color entrepreneurs from her programs

PUBLISHED Books *Million Dollar Women* and *Go Big Now*; former podcast “Million Dollar Mind” turned into live show on LinkedIn, “Go Big Now Live”; sales training tips videos on YouTube channel

WHERE TO FOLLOW LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, juliapimsleur.com, millionwomen.com



mindset shifts

“I’m hearing concerns from C-level executives about accessing capital to grow a business in a tough economy. I’m also hearing they are having challenges with the new hybrid work culture and figuring out how to manage them and keep that same powerful culture that they had before the pandemic. The three top challenges I hear from my clients, regardless of the economy, are: First, how to build a scalable business, that they’re making money but working way too hard, and that they don’t want to continue growing the business in this way. The second challenge I hear a lot is how do I make sure I have the right team and become the manager and leader that I need to be in order to grow the business and continue to motivate and expand my team. And then the third thing is really managing the finances and making sure that they have the right capital to grow. It’s key to do a lot of work around culture building and having the right systems and processes. Is there a more efficient, scalable way to grow it? You want to determine what you’re trying to achieve, why you haven’t been able to achieve it, and dig into some of the mindset issues.” ■

—*Real Leaders staff*

BIG PICTURE

Planting America's Ag-Tech Capital





→ High-Tech Farming

In Central Appalachia, AppHarvest created some of the world's largest high-tech indoor farms. Artificial intelligence, robotics, and automation help ensure that crops are picked fresh, plants stay healthy, and the environment is optimized for quality production. Hundreds of strategically placed sensors gauge microclimates and calculate the precise levels of light, water, humidity, and carbon dioxide that each plant needs to thrive.



Mission and Impact

Jonathan Webb (pictured) founded AppHarvest in 2017 upon returning home to Eastern Kentucky from a renewable energy project with the U.S. government. He is on a mission to turn Appalachia into the agricultural technology capital of America. Impact focused, Webb made AppHarvest a public benefit corporation and a Certified B Corporation. Revolutionizing farming isn't easy, but he embraces the regional motto "faith and grit."



“If stakeholders can start to align — from consumers to government regulation to private companies and investors — and if we pivot our food system quickly, there can be a great next revolution in American farming.”

—JONATHAN WEBB, FOUNDER OF APPHARVEST

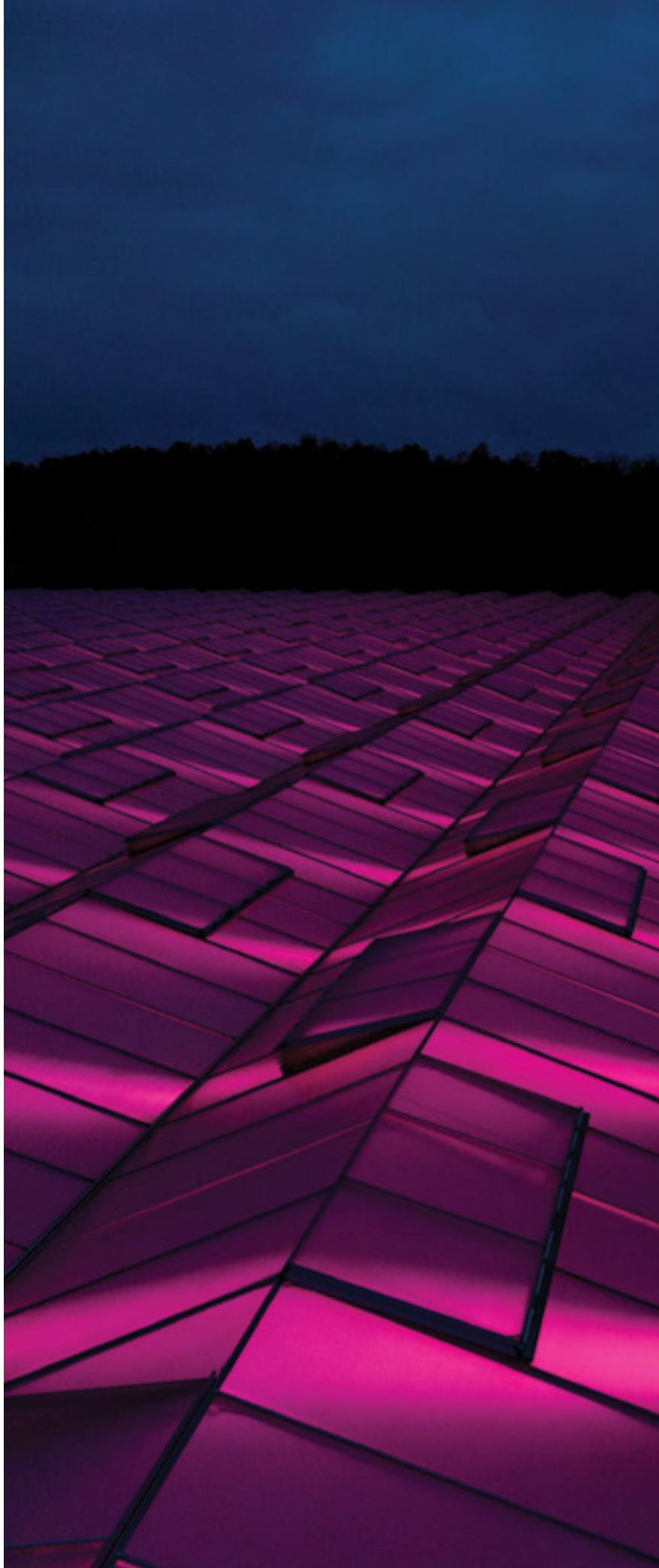


→ A Growing Operation AppHarvest established three farms totaling 150 glass-enclosed acres in Kentucky. Tomatoes are grown at its 60-acre flagship in Morehead and on 60 acres in Richmond; and strawberries and cucumbers grow on 30 acres in Somerset. The farms are within a day’s drive of about 70% of U.S. consumers, providing local produce picked at peak ripeness.



→ Zero-Waste Commitment

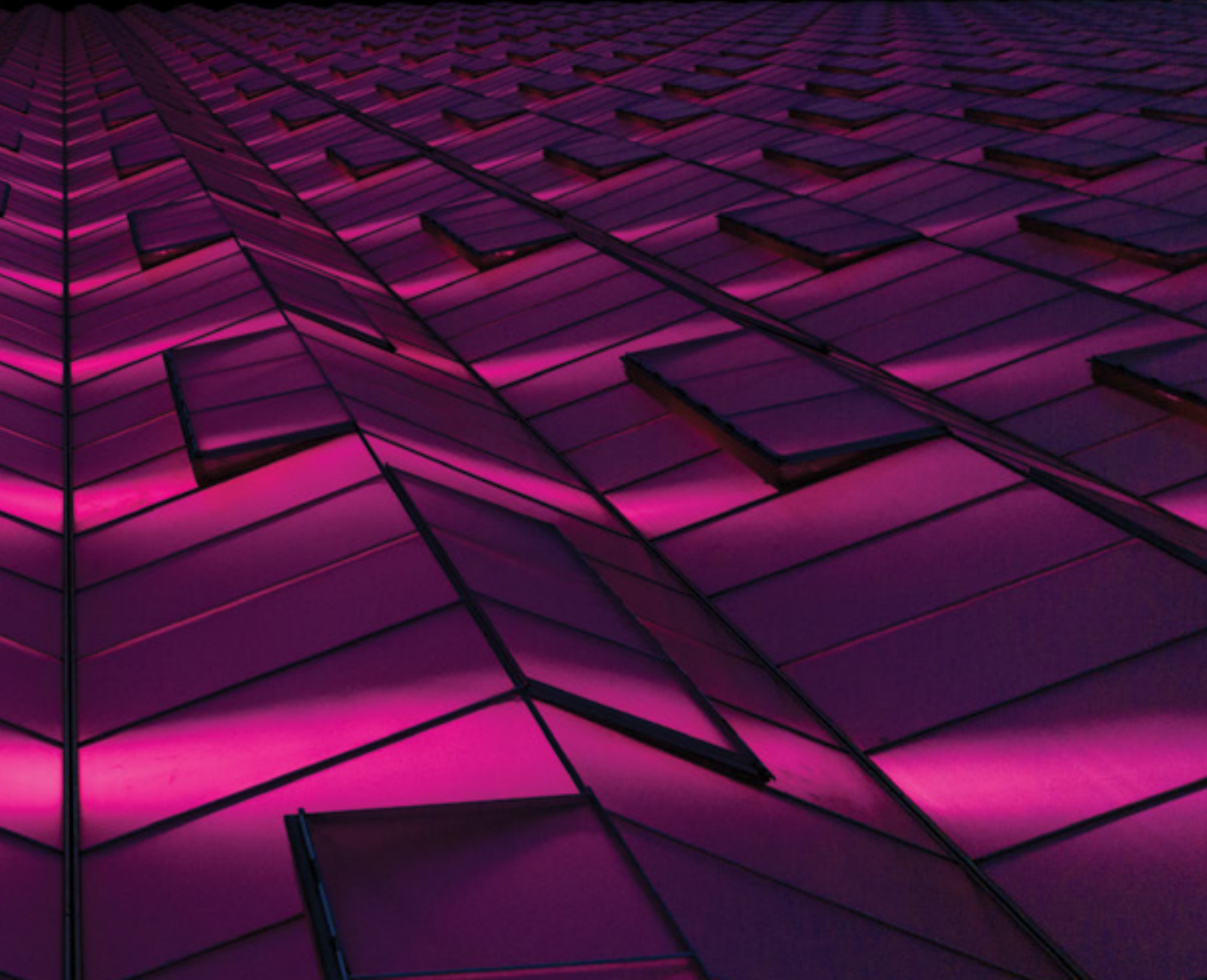
An estimated 30% of the food produced globally for human consumption is wasted somewhere along the food supply chain, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. AppHarvest follows the Environmental Protection Agency's Food Recovery Hierarchy, repurposing over-ripe or imperfect crops in products like salsa and donating to area food banks and local farms for animal feed. AppHarvest's indoor farming method also mitigates the threat of losing crops to extreme droughts, raging wildfires, and a rapidly changing climate. To inspire future leaders, AppHarvest helped develop an ag-tech education program for high school students with high-tech farm classrooms in a dozen area schools.





Efficiency and the Elements

Sunshine, rainwater, and up to 90% less water than open-field growing are used to produce yields up to 30 times that of traditional agriculture on the same amount of land — and without agricultural runoff. With its closed-loop irrigation system, nearly every drop of rainwater that enters an AppHarvest facility through its retention ponds leaves as a crop. Sunlight is supplemented with efficient LEDs and high-pressure sodium grow lights to boost harvests for increased, sustainable crop growth year-round.





David Young | CEO
at Participate Learning



Julie Davitz | Founder/CEO
at Plus Media Solutions



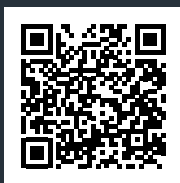
Sandra Moore | Managing Director &
Chief Impact Officer at Advantage Capital



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Empowering Remote Communities

A Mastercard leader founds a social impact business that drives change through technology.

Nearly half of the world's population lives on less than \$5.50 a day, struggling to access basic needs like food, water, education, and health care services, according to the World Bank — and Tara Nathan is not OK with that.

As Mastercard's executive vice president of digital solutions for the humanitarian and development sector, Nathan is using her expertise to help uplift marginalized communities through technology. Nathan created a social impact business within Mastercard called Community Pass in 2019. It digitally enables the delivery of critical services at scale — including agriculture, health, commerce, identity, and humanitarian aid — to low-income, remote communities. It's a classic example of business as a force for good.

"As a digital transaction company, we can't be successful if we're only relevant to 50% of the population," Nathan says. "Someone came to me with a problem that mattered, and I knew how to solve it. I have a background in mobile money and leveraging technology to solve critical issues at scale, and this seemed like a perfect opportunity to combine my experiences and create a fit-for-purpose digital solution to serve marginalized communities."

Community Pass has grown quickly, surpassing 3.5 million users on its shared platform in 2023, more than triple the number of users it had in 2022. Mastercard made a public commitment to reach 30 million users by 2027.

"We are laser focused on driving value and profitability for everyone in the service delivery



“**SOMEONE CAME TO ME WITH A PROBLEM THAT MATTERED, AND I KNEW HOW TO SOLVE IT.**”



LISTEN UP
Hear Tara Nathan's full conversation with us on the Real Leaders Podcast.

ecosystem, from financial institutions to ag-techs to end users, and that's how we've gained traction," Nathan shares.

Nathan has been with Mastercard for 14 years. She started as CEO of Mobile Payment Solutions in the company's joint venture with Smart Hub, leading the innovation and commercial development of the Mastercard Mobile Payments Gateway, an open mobile payment processing platform especially helpful to consumers in emerging economies. After that, she served as executive director of public private partnerships.

Looking back, Nathan feels that her past career experiences in the public and private sectors prepared her for her current role. She spent seven years as a diplomat in the U.S. Foreign Service and founded a nongovernmental organization for at-risk youth in Los Angeles before heading to Citigroup. There she worked in the company's cross-sell business and held various management roles across its retail banking business, including commercial banking, risk, and operations.

"In the most recent third of my career, I've brought all of my previous experiences together and turned my focus to leveraging the strengths of the private sector to create scalable, sustainable change in the world," she says.

Currently, she leads the company's strategy to develop and scale new digital and commercial solutions for people living in fragile political and economic contexts. By working in collaboration with governments, nongovernmental organizations, and



other private sector companies, Nathan's team drives commercially sustainable social impact and inclusive economic growth across the globe.

With Community Pass, service providers access features that enable digital transactions: a functional identity, a shared wallet, a digital acceptance device, and a secure and protected data platform. By shifting from manual to digital transactions, those service providers can use Community Pass as a platform to increase access to essential services and reduce the cost of delivering them — an approach that is especially needed in rural settings.

Over 60% of developing economies have no internet connectivity, and even those considered “online” have only intermittent connectivity that is slow or unaffordable, which can limit access to financial services. Community Pass works in both offline and online environments and creates access to a multitude of payment and non-payment applications without requiring a smartphone or connectivity.

“In addition, over a billion people around the world lack access to any form of identity,” Nathan says. “They’re invisible to banks and service providers, so even if the services are available, there is no way for a provider to know that there is an individual in need. By helping service providers

‘know’ their customers, Community Pass's digital ID ecosystem brings visibility to underserved consumers and allows institutions to serve them with ease and at low cost.”

Community Pass has proven effective in the agricultural sector as well. For instance, smallholder farmers leverage Community Pass to connect more directly to markets and command higher prices. They can build digital records of their transactions, enabling financial institutions to lend to them. Then they can buy better seeds and fertilizer, which can improve their yields. Plus, by connecting farmers directly with buyers, Community Pass empowers them to negotiate the best price for their produce, becoming price makers rather than price takers.

“Community Pass gives us so much information,” says Chinnaswamy, a smallholder farmer from a village in Kanada, India. “Now, we can do all our farming on time. So much has improved.”

Community Pass is one piece of the bigger picture. “With something as simple as a digital identity for a smallholder farmer in a rural village, you start to create a virtuous cycle of economic empowerment,” Nathan says. “Our focus is on the long term. It’s the right thing to do for the communities we serve, and it’s the right thing to do for our business.” ■

—*Real Leaders staff*

Community Pass founder Tara Nathan, seated second from left, visits Community Pass users in rural India.

Work-Life Integration



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DON WENNER

This impact CEO's formula for happiness blends work, family, and travel.

Don Wenner is a husband, father of three, and the founder and CEO of DLP Capital, a private real estate and financial services firm with high growth and impact. He's also all about work-life integration, which has gained popularity as a more holistic, blended take on the concept of work-life balance.

Wenner lives with intention and focuses on what he calls “the eight Fs of life:” faith, family, friends, freedom, fun, fulfillment, fitness, and finance. He uses a baseball analogy to describe how he can be working on several Fs at the same time, loading his bases and aiming for triples and homeruns.

“I want to have as much of my life that’s integrated together,” Wenner says. “I want as much as possible not to have any conflict between my job as a father

and my job as a husband with my job as a founder and CEO of my organization.”

He is thankful that work-life integration is much more achievable in today’s culture of remote work. For instance, he can work late from home if needed and still catch family dinner in between, unlike at a remote office. Wenner and his wife also value travel, so they homeschool their children and divide their time almost equally each year between St. Augustine, Florida; Asheville, North Carolina; and a world travel destination. For support and structure, the Wenners hire a traveling teacher and a chauffeur/helper.

“I’m still working maybe 50 to 60 hours a week, but I’m fully present with my family the rest of the time, intentionally giving our kids the kind of experiences and lifestyle that my wife and I want to create,”



LISTEN UP
Hear Don Wenner's full conversation with us on the Real Leaders Podcast.



Don Wenner and his wife and children divide each year between Florida, North Carolina, and a world travel destination.



Wenner says. “It’s definitely different. It’s not for everybody, but it’s been wonderful for us.”

While growing their family — their children are now ages 11, 10, and 1 — Wenner simultaneously has grown his company by 50 percent or more every year since its inception 17 years ago, now with over 450 employees. DLP Capital was repeatedly recognized for its fast growth, including as a 2023 Real Leaders Top Impact Company, and as a best place to work, surpassed 2,500 investors in the DLP Impact Funds, and has \$5 billion of assets under management. But he’s mindful of not letting work consume him.

“Understanding that my job as a father and a husband outranks my job as founder and CEO of my company has been there from day one,” Wenner shares. “I’ve been present and home for dinner more nights than not. I’m home and present on the weekends. I’ve coached 17 seasons now of flag football for my kids. I want to have as much influence as possible over who they become and how they experience the world and learn. I’ve been blessed to build an organization that has given me the freedom and flexibility to do that.” For Wenner, work-life integration is the formula for a rewarding life. ■

—Real Leaders staff

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Unearth Pure Bliss

Find joy, well-being, and connection on your travels while helping heal the planet.

By *Shreya Ghodawat*

If travel is to see new places, sustainable travel is an invitation to tread lightly and nurture a symbiotic relationship with the destinations we encounter — cherishing the beauty while safeguarding the essence of these places for generations to come.

The world's travel and tourism industry is a vast and powerful force, generating billions of dollars in revenue each year. But with this power comes responsibility. As tourists, we have a choice: We can either contribute to the destruction of our planet, or we can use our travels to help heal it. All too often, our pleasure and enjoyment come at the expense of local habitats and wildlife.

When we travel sustainably, we are more likely to slow down, take in our surroundings, and connect with the natural world around us. This can help us to feel more grounded and create a pathway to mindful exploration. Imagine walking along a pristine white-sand beach, the sun shining down on you, and the waves crashing gently against the shore. To be surrounded by lush green vegetation and the sound of birdsong renders the soul at peace.

When we carry a reusable water bottle instead of a single-use plastic bottle, or when we choose to walk or use a bicycle instead of driving, there is an undisputed sense of fulfillment and harmony within an adventurous spirit.

My personal journey toward sustainable travel began with a profound and undeniable realization: that the essence of truly enriching our explorations lies in discovering joy, well-being, and deep connections. Mindful travel does not demand sacrificing comfort or imposing unnecessary restrictions upon ourselves. On the contrary, it presents an invaluable opportunity to unearth and experience pure bliss in the most unexpected corners of the world.

Being in nature has a restorative effect on our lives. Immersing oneself in pristine environments can help travelers escape the stresses of everyday life. It is mindful travel that led me to discover the beauty and fragility of our planet. Experiencing a sunrise over a mountain peak or bathing in the tranquility of a forest brings about joy that is unparalleled by anything else. It also reminds me of our individual

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responsibility to preserve the natural world for future generations.

Throughout my ventures to over 65 countries across the globe, I have been blessed with the opportunity to intimately witness the deep impact our actions have on both the local economy and the environment. When we foster genuine connections with the communities that call these places home, we bring back something that goes far beyond mere souvenirs.

One way to look at it is through the lens of hospitality and leading the charter through sustainable practices at the source. Whether it be offering vegan or plant-based food to promote a more sustainable food system, judicious utilization of water, or opting for renewable energy, a host can contribute to long-term positive change.

From the perspective of a mindful traveler, planning makes an incredible difference in this experience. Choosing eco-friendly accommodations, dining at locally owned restaurants, and practicing fair trade contribute directly to the economic well-being of the destination.

When crafting my itinerary, I prefer to seek out low-key destinations during the offseason, purposefully escaping the hustle and bustle of city life. Engaging with local artisans, participating in community-based projects, or volunteering with conservation initiatives offers an invaluable platform to learn about diverse cultures, traditions, and challenges.

Knowing first-hand the power of travel in bridging cultural gaps, supporting local businesses, and absorbing authentic experiences allows us to learn about different ways of life, traditions, and perspectives. Sharing stories, laughter, and meals with locals transcends boundaries and creates lasting memories.

Personally, I find great satisfaction in supporting women-owned businesses. Women often champion sustainability and demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility. By empowering and endorsing small businesses run by women, we help shape tourism away from exploitative practices. These experiences enrich our daily lives, offering new insights that enhance our creativity and provide fresh perspectives on various topics. And by becoming responsible travelers, we embark on a transformative journey that extends beyond leisure, allowing us to evolve as conscious global citizens.

It is important to remember that as a tourist, we carry significant influence. The money we spend, the social interactions we engage in, and the resources we consume all wield considerable power in shaping the very fabric and future of a given area. The joy lies in the knowledge that our travel adventures leave behind a positive legacy, benefiting not only ourselves but also the communities and ecosystems we encounter along the way. ■

Shreya Ghodawat is a sustainability strategist, impact entrepreneur, writer, speaker, and advisor in the fields of sustainable ecotourism and lifestyle. She is founder and CEO of Sustainable Guides, as well as the India ambassador for She Changes Climate.



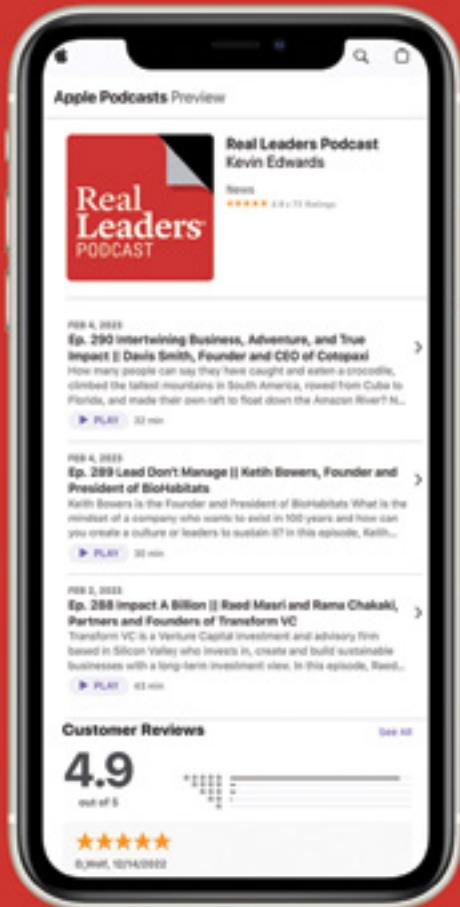
Sustainable Trip-Planning Tips

- Book bus or train travel instead of a flight.
- If you must fly, significantly limit your flights, choose a more responsible airline, and book a direct flight where possible.
- Regardless of your transportation, offset your carbon.
- Choose references penned by reputable locals and community members.
- Pack in a sustainable suitcase. The most sustainable option is the one you already own.
- Book a sustainable, environmentally friendly or small-scale, locally owned hotel.



Download the full Pre-Trip Sustainability Checklist at sustainableguides.com.

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Health Guardianship: The Remedy to the Sick Care System

Surgeon-scientist Firouz Daneshgari, PhD, calls for change in the American health care system. He aims to create an institution that is "accessible, affordable, high quality, and consumer-centric," and his book delves into a framework for this new system to thrive.



Becoming a Leader of Impact: How Your Influence Can Change the World

In his guidebook, Braden Douglas discusses the philosophy behind LeaderImpact, a movement of professionals dedicated to creating positive change and leaving a legacy. Douglas inspires readers to make a positive difference in all areas of life, from personal to professional to spiritual.



PODCAST

Must-Listen Episodes

The Real Leaders Podcast is your No. 1 source for impact leaders who harness capitalism to sustain planet, people, and profit.



Ep. 312
Jonathan Quarles | Founder and CEO, Quartz Water Source

"When I think about ways in which I can have a greater impact, it's about people and the planet – this idea of leaving it better than you actually found it. I ask myself every day, 'What kind of magic am I going to create in someone's life or in an organization?'"



Ep. 313
Sean Shea | Founder and President, Virtual Intelligence Briefing

"At the beginning, the purpose really was maximizing profits. However, realizing that we've built something special, we have the ability to give back and give people a second chance. Even some of our employees are people whom others might have not given a second chance to."



Ep. 332
Elaine Rasmussen | Founder and CEO, Social Impact Strategies Group

"Particularly Black and Brown entrepreneurs are not interested in selling their company, so the venture capital model starts to break down there. If you are a first-generation entrepreneur, why would you want to sell? We've got to figure out not only where good-intended money is, but what actually is needed."

DOCUMENTARY

Watch and Learn

Tune in and tune up your knowledge on key issues while deepening your understanding.



David Attenborough: A Life on our Planet

In his intimate documentary and book, Emmy-winning narrator David Attenborough reflects on the defining moments of his 90-plus years exploring and documenting Earth. He calls for action for a better future. "We need to learn how to work with nature rather than against it, and I'm going to tell you how," he says.

COMIC RELIEF

The Lighter Side of Life



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Quotes excerpted from the Real Leaders Podcast and condensed for space.



Ep. 333
Julie Davitz | Founder and CEO, Plus Media Solutions

"Transparency and communication around true impact, purpose, and sustainability are always good for the consumer. Human nature is such that if you are transparent, you might even say something like, 'Maybe I'm not the best at this, but I'm trying.' That really wins hearts and minds, which then opens wallets."



Ep. 337
Racquel Moses | CEO, Caribbean Climate-Smart Accelerator

"The most important things in business are having a purpose, understanding your 'why,' and getting everyone motivated. In the nonprofit space, you have that baked in. It's work that most people would do for free if they had financial freedom. So, people show up excited, engaged, and willing to dig in."



Ep. 380
Jacob Sussman | Founder and President, Superpower Mentors

"Mentorship works. The data is there. We're teaching kids how to effectively communicate and advocate for their needs. Right now, 40% of U.S. students drop out of college, and 30% of them are freshmen. A big reason for that, besides finances, is stress, which we can prevent through mentorship."

Global Glue

A new UN board calls for six shifts to strengthen world cooperation.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres established the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB) in 2022 to improve international cooperation through effective multilateralism. He brought together a group of 12 leaders from the fields of politics, civil society, the private sector, and academia and tasked them with identifying concrete, actionable recommendations to address shared global challenges and achieve a more effective, interconnected, and inclusive multilateral system.

This past June, HLAB member and Club de Madrid president Danilo Türk presented HLAB's published report on its recommendations at IE University in Madrid, Spain, to inform member states ahead of the UN Summit of the Future. "Combining the needed bold proposals that are also realistic is never simple," Türk said in his presentation. "I hope that it will include the academic sphere very actively because as the basic shifts that we propose suggest, it has to reflect the needs of our time beyond what the governments are currently capable of articulating — because the governments will define policies for the future, but they have to be assisted in defining those needs with clarity."

HLAB's report centers on "The Six Transformative Shifts," which are summarized as follows.

YUICHIRO OHINO / GETTY IMAGES



SHIFT 1 Rebuild Trust in Multilateralism

Inclusive, effective multilateralism requires a fundamental transformation toward more distributed, networked, and accountable decision-making for our collective well-being.

Recommendations

- ➔ Represent “we the people” in the multilateral system.
- ➔ Meaningful inclusion of cities and regions.
- ➔ Include and obligate the private sector.
- ➔ Innovations for more effective decision-making.

SHIFT 2 Planet and People

To flourish as a species, we must regain balance with nature and with one another, treating ecosystems as a primary asset for securing our collective well-being.

Recommendations

- ➔ Conclude a pact for people and planet.
- ➔ Equitably distribute clean energy.
- ➔ Price and regulate carbon for a just, green transition.
- ➔ Elevate the environment within the multilateral system.

SHIFT 3 Global Finance

A rapid, sizable increase in long-term investment for people and planet will reduce inequalities and safeguard our shared life support systems.

Recommendations

- ➔ Repurpose the Multilateral Development Bank system.
- ➔ Strengthen the Global Financial Safety Net.
- ➔ Ensure greater automaticity and fairness in Special Drawing Rights allocations.
- ➔ Enact governance changes at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.
- ➔ Strengthen the global debt architecture.
- ➔ Facilitate regulatory frameworks for financial flows.
- ➔ Pursue global taxation reforms.

SHIFT 4 Digital and Data Governance

The solutions developed over the next few critical years will shape societies for decades. Our solutions must be human-centered and rights-respecting; encourage open dialogue, exchange, and learning between cultures and sectors; and build on past successes.

Recommendations

- ➔ Support a just digital transition by addressing digital poverty, inequality, and harms.
- ➔ Lay the foundations of an enabling architecture for the data century.

SHIFT 5 Peace and Prevention

Evolving our global governance arrangements can more effectively and legitimately address the broad range of risks to our collective security.

Recommendations

- ➔ Commit to our collective security.
- ➔ Reform Security Council, strengthen Peacebuilding Commission.
- ➔ Collective security frameworks between UN and regional organizations.
- ➔ Increase transparency on peace and security.
- ➔ Strengthen and accelerate denuclearization.

SHIFT 6 Anticipatory Action

We need to position the multilateral system to respond more nimbly and effectively to emerging threats and act quickly and decisively in situations of uncertainty.

Recommendations

- ➔ Broaden understanding of and responses to the security risks posed by climate change.
- ➔ Governance of biological and health risks.
- ➔ Safe, effective management of emerging technologies.
- ➔ Combat transnational organized crime. ■



Download the full report by the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism at highleveladvisoryboard.org.

Impactful Holiday Gifts

'Tis the season to give thoughtfully. We collected holiday gift ideas from 2023 Real Leaders Top Impact Companies to help you shop responsibly, from stocking stuffers to showstoppers.



Pooch Pampering

Landfill-Saving Pet Beds

P.L.A.Y. is a leading provider of safe, sustainable, high-quality dog and cat beds, including this Royal Crest Lounge Bed. By converting used plastic bottles into plush bed filler, it has already saved over 14 million bottles from landfills. For every bed purchased, one is donated to a shelter in need. petplay.com

'Wheely' Impactful

E-Bikes that Give Back

The Co-op Cycles CTY e2.2 Electric Bike is REI's ultimate e-bike to help lower your carbon footprint. REI also offers rental services, product repairs, and a trade-in program. The outdoor, member-owned co-op has a grassroots advocacy program, invests over 70% of profits into the outdoor community, and sources recycled materials when possible. rei.com





Cozy Cashmere

Dual-Purpose Scarves

This Love is the Answer Scarf is made of 100% recycled cashmere, helping mitigate the grassland desertification caused by cashmere production. Plus, The House of LR&C donates 3% to support disadvantaged youth. thehouseoflrc.com



Ethical Essentials

Compassionate Socks

Bombas brings pro-level foot protection with this Antelope Heavyweight Merino Wool Blend Ski & Snowboard Sock 3-Pack. For every item sold, one piece of essential clothing helps those affected by homelessness, with 100 million items donated. Bombas uses a percentage of recycled polyester and organic cotton in its durable socks. bombas.com



Buzzed for Bees

Do-Good Cocktails

Dedicated to saving honeybees, Siponey is the first Certified B Corporation cocktail company and gives 2% of annual revenues back to nonprofit environmentalists around the world. These premium canned drinks blend wildflower honey, sparkling water, lemon juice, and aged rye whiskey. siponey.com



Self-Care with Care

All-Natural Body Balm

Women owned, Badger creates high-quality natural body balms using minimally processed, Fair Trade Certified ingredients. This Restore, Recover and Rest Kit includes Badger's three most popular tins. They're made with solar power and from organic, GMO-free ingredients in infinitely recyclable packaging. badgerbalm.com



Traceable Luxury

Thoughtful Skin Hydration

L'Occitane's Immortelle Shea Body Balm is made with shea butter from 100% Fair Trade Certified, women-run cooperatives in West Africa. Ingredients are sourced as sustainably as possible, and 80% of ingredients in rinse-off products are biodegradable. Two-hundred tons of plastic are saved yearly through its refill program. loccitane.com



Wicked Wake Up

Responsibly Sourced Coffee

Wicked Joe produces organic, Fair Trade coffee using sustainable business practices from crop to cup. It has diverted more than 60,000 pounds of java from the waste stream through composting, as well as created a community garden initiative. Its Honduras Partnership supports students at a technical vocational school. wickedjoe.com

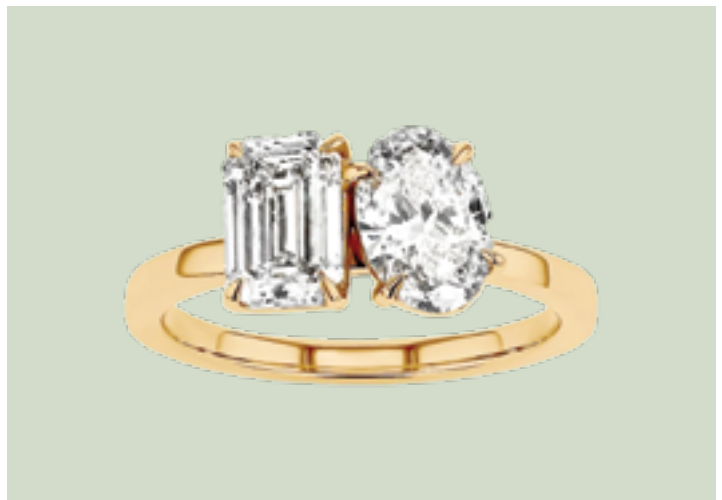


Upcycled Entrance**Furniture for the Planet**

Avocado makes this Zero Waste Entryway Table with upcycled wood, so it's 100% sustainable. Plus, the company uses only certified organic, natural, and non-toxic materials, is a Certified B Corporation, is Climate Neutral Certified, and all of its factories are powered by renewable energy. [avocadogreenmattress.com](https://www.avocadogreenmattress.com)

**Smart Steps****Sustainable Shoes**

Men's Wool Runner-Up Mizzle Plus shoes keep feet warm, dry, and stable on wet-weather winter walks. To boot, Allbirds uses sustainable materials, including a sole made from the first carbon-negative green ethylene-vinyl acetate. Allbirds is a carbon-neutral business certified by Climate Neutral, and it balances emissions by funding high-impact carbon projects. [allbirds.com](https://www.allbirds.com)

**Sparkling Solutions****Conflict-Free Diamonds**

This dazzling Fleur Toi Et Moi Lab-Grown Diamond Ring is created by MiaDonna, one of the world's first retailers exclusively selling lab-grown diamonds, which are set on 100% recycled gold or platinum. The Certified B Corporation donates 10% of annual profits to help rebuild and repair mining communities and plants a tree for every order shipped. [miadonna.com](https://www.miadonna.com)

IMAGINE

... A World with Gender Pay Equality

→ The gender pay gap nearly stalled these past two decades. American women earned an average of 82% of men's earnings in 2022, an increase of just 2 percentage points since 2002, according to Pew Research. Not quite one in every three managers or supervisors is a woman, and at the current pace, parity will not be achieved for another 140 years, the United Nations says. The pay gap persists even though women today are more likely than men to have graduated college, Pew notes. Gender stereotypes and discrimination appear among the "last-mile" hurdles impeding progress, Pew notes. Advocacy and policy implementation can help close the gap. ■

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Blue Planet Alliance founder Henk Rogers and BPA partner, renowned oceanographer Dr. Sylvia Earle

Blue Planet Alliance

is a nonprofit organization founded by visionary entrepreneur and leading climate change advocate Henk Rogers.



Blue Planet Alliance founder Henk Rogers and Guam Governor Lou Leon Guerrero with a signed Blue Planet Climate Agreement

Our Mission

We work with islands and countries around the world to legislatively mandate a transition to 100% renewable energy by 2045. We collaborate with governments, businesses, and individuals to grow a global movement aimed at reducing the negative impact on the planet—and we want you to join us!



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